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EW figures in the history of England have held such a glamorous appeal as the son of Edward III., the Black Prince. Miss Coryn's book is, in a way, a companion volume to *Black Mastiff*, covering practically the same period of the Hundred Years' War, 1330-1376. In it the author has taken, and worked from, the English point of view.

It contains such incidents as the Battle of Crécy, the Siege of Calais, Prince Edward's raid through Southern France, the Battle of Poitiers, the Spanish Campaign, and the Sack of Limoges. The romantic flavour is supplied by the rather charming love-story of the Prince and the Fair Maid of Kent.

The author has tried to give not so much a political history of the times, as a study of Prince Edward's character and personality as a man, and a colourful description of the life and customs of the period.

THE BLACK PRINCE

THE BLACK PRINCE

1330-1376

BY

M. CORYN

AUTHOR OF "THE CHEVALIER D'LOH"
"BLACK MASTIFF" "THU ACQUIRER"



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FOREWORD

“ THE flower of all the chivalry of the world of his time.” Such was the judgment of Jean Froissart on Edward, Prince of Wales, and such undoubtedly was the truth. But what was it, that flower of chivalry of his time? What resemblance had it to the lovely thing which, five centuries before, had come pushing up out of the Dark Ages like a water-lily from the black depths of a stagnant pool, and before whose white mystery all men had bent the knee?

Pure, immaculate, unsullied, it had budded and had bloomed on the turgid waters of mediæval life; but now, in this fourteenth century, it had come to its end, and one by one its petals had fallen, leaving nothing behind them but the dark unloveliness of a rough seed-pod.

There were men who looked on at the withering of the flower of chivalry who were ready to take that haish, brown seed-pod and keep it safe until such time as it was ripe for a replanting and a rebirth. Of such were Bertrand du Guesclin, the Breton, and the Englishman, John Chandos. But there were others—and of these was Prince Edward—who could not take leave of the dead beauty of the past and look forward with hope to the new beauty that was to be born; men who clung to a thing that had been fair, but that was so no more, because its time was run.

They could not bring themselves to bury the dead past, because they had loved it, and because their love was not wise enough to tell them that all the noble, all the rich and lovely things of the earth that wither and die, must of necessity spring up again in their own good season. They could not let the withered blossom fall to the ground to enrich the soil from which it would bloom again. They raised it up on their shields, the dead flower of chivalry, and laid it away in a dark place out of the sight of common men ; and they who before had worshipped in the free air and the open sunlight, worshipped now in a sepulchre.

With reverent hands they had preserved it ; and so that that which was dead might yet have a seeming of life, they daubed it with strange colours ; with *gules*, and *azure*, with *argent* and *or* and *sable*. Of the free white lily of chivalry afloat on the warm waters of life, they made a monstrous, an impossible thing—a strange, stark flower of heraldry emblazoned on the cold steel of a shield. And it was this distorted, lifeless emblem of a dead faith that Prince Edward carried upon his breast and in his heart, and in whose name he ruled his actions, to the last day of his life.

Yet let no man speak lightly of the faith of Edward the Black Prince. It may be that he worshipped an ideal as distorted and as artificial as that strange heraldic flower that was its emblem ; but he worshipped it in utter sincerity. It may be that he kissed the blade of his sword more often than the cross of its hilt ; but his kiss left the steel clean and untarnished. And it may well be that it is better to worship even false ideals with a fervent heart

and soul than to look on the true with indifference ; it may be that it is better to kiss the blade than to throw away the cross ; it may be, too, that it is better to kneel before a deserted altar in an empty temple than never to kneel at all. But of a certainty it is better to keep even a dead heraldic flower spotless and unsoiled, than to stamp a living flower into the mud. And spotless and unsoiled did Edward, Prince of Wales, keep that flower of his, that flower of all the chivalry of the world of his time.

M. C.

PARIS, 1933-34

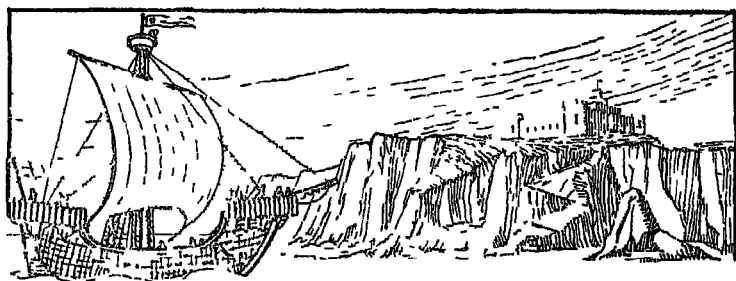
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PART ONE

" Cestui prince fut un des moilleurs chevaliers de cest monde. En son temps il en avoit renom sur tous."

Chronique des Quatre Premiers Valois.



PART ONE

MANY a father takes his small son to circus or show, and many a father gives audible and delighted signs of his pleasure in the puerile spectacle, while his offspring sits in dignified silence beside him, too overawed by the splendour of the occasion to offer other than mute and grave-eyed homage to it. So now, in this year of grace 1346, Edward, Third of the name, King of England, set out with his fifteen-year-old son, Edward, Earl of Chester, Duke of Cornwall, and Prince of Wales, towards the only "show" that was worthy the attention of a Plantagenet—that of war. Edward the King sat under an awning on the deck of his ship, and gave forth lusty expression of his pleasure in a series of bellowed-out songs of love and the chase. But Edward the Prince stood far forward in the prow, alone, solemn-eyed, silent, straining his gaze forward towards that horizon over which would soon come looming the pale cliffs of France, the white tent of the tremendous circus he was to attend.

This was not the first time Prince Edward had ventured abroad, for he had more than once voyaged to Flanders with his father. Yet on those occasions, for all he had been "a proper, hopeful young gentleman,"¹ and already "acceptable to the ladies' eyes,"² he had been no more

¹ Barnes.

² *Ibid.*

than a child, and those but childish pleasure trips. But this was his first man's adventure, his first *grande chevauchée*, and he was going towards it, not as a little lad to a picnic, but as an armed man, as a companion-in-arms to that handsome young father of his whom he so much admired. So it is small wonder that his smooth brow was darkened with thought, that his slim young shoulders were rigid under the weight of responsibility that lay upon them.

Care and responsibility he felt, but no shadow of a doubt—for who, indeed, could doubt of the justice of the cause in which he was to make his first arms? Surely none more righteous could exist—that of thrusting an usurper from a wrongly occupied throne, that of bringing a headstrong people to a proper obedience to their rightful lord. And in Prince Edward's young mind there could be no shadow of a question that Philippe VI. of France—or Philippe de Valois, as he contemptuously termed him—sat wrongfully on the throne of France, to the ousting of its rightful occupant, his own father, Edward of England.

He knew every detail, every legal quibble of that struggle for the crown of France; his tutor, Dr. Walter Burley, had seen to that, and he had lapped up the knowledge eagerly. He knew that in 1328 had died Charles IV., called "Le Bel," third and last son of Philippe IV.; and that, like his two elder brothers, he had died leaving no male descendant to reign after him. But he had left a young wife, Jeanne d'Evreux, great with child—so that until such time as it could be known whether she would bear a son or a daughter, there could be no question of any but a regent to rule over the kingdom of France. Edward III. of England, urged on by his mother Isabella of France, sister of the dead French king, had claimed his right to that regency, as being the closest male relative of the child that was to be born; but the people of France had objected to his nomination on two heads: firstly, that he was a foreigner, and secondly, that he was too

young to undertake so great a responsibility, being only in his sixteenth year at the time, and the idea of a child regent and an infant king filled them with misgivings.

So they chose for their Regent Philippe de Valois, son of a younger brother of Philippe IV., a man in the full force of his thirty-five years, and a member of their own royal house.

Edward, or rather his mother Isabella, had not insisted. But when the young Queen Jeanne was delivered of a girl-child, he had laid another and a graver claim; that to the throne of France itself. Once again he had been rebuffed, and once again for two reasons: his nationality and the fact that his claim lay through a woman, his mother; which, given the Salic law, barred him effectively from the throne, according to the argument of the legists of France. Prince Edward smiled scornfully to himself at the thought, for he had been taught the answer to that argument; that while a female might not herself have the right to mount the throne of France, she might transmit that right to her male descendants. But the men of law of France had had an answer to that too, saying that a woman could not give away that which she had never possessed, and that Isabella, king's daughter and king's sister though she might be, not having received her father's heritage, could not bestow that heritage upon her son, Edward III. Prince Edward dismissed the argument as being but the hair-splitting device of a crew of ill-intentioned grey-beards; but nevertheless the people of France had accepted it gladly, and once more had turned their eyes towards Philippe, a man of their own race, and moreover a direct descendant in the male line from Saint Louis. So Philippe de Valois became Philippe VI., King of France, by right of the laws and the will of the people of France.

The people! Prince Edward's lip curled. What right had the people of France, or any other people, to have their opinions, much less to express them, as to who should or

should not govern their country? God gave countries kings to rule over them, and the people had no other right nor duty than to accept that gift with reverence and gratitude; and to the young Prince there could be no doubt that it was the will of God that Edward of England should rule over the kingdom of France, since he had permitted him to be born one degree of kinship nearer to its throne than the present unlawful occupier of it. And he, Edward, Prince of Wales, would see to it that God's will should not be made a mockery of by an upstart son of a younger son, and by a stiff-necked and obstinate people.

True, King Edward himself had since paid homage for his Duchy of Aquitaine to the Frenchman who called himself a king; and the angry blood mounted to the lad's brow at the thought. His father, Edward III. of England, had publicly acknowledged himself the vassal of this upstart, this prince of a cadet line, this Philippe de Valois, who styled himself King of France. But Edward the King had been but a lad of seventeen then, a mere child (so thought Edward the Prince, forgetting the briefness of his own tale of years). He had gone to France and there, in the Cathedral of Amiens, he had appeared before Philippe of France. Clad in a crimson velvet gown enriched with golden leopards, with his royal crown upon his head, his sword at his side, and his knightly spurs at his heels, he had made a right noble young figure of royalty. And there, before the high chair of State upon which sat the blue-robed Philippe, in the presence of King Philippe of Navarre, of John, King of Bohemia, and of Jayme of Aragon, King of Majorca, and a vast throng of the peers and barons of France, men had taken from him his golden crown, his sword and his spurs; and thus despoiled of the emblems of his royal rank and dignity, he had knelt down before King Philippe. Then he had placed his hands between those of the Frenchman, while the Viscount of Melun, Chamberlain of France, repeated for him the words

of the homage : " You become liege-man to my master, here present, as Duke of Aquitaine and Peer of France ; you promise to bear faith and loyalty to him : say, ' Yea. ' " And there, in the Cathedral of Amiens, before that brilliant throng of kings and nobles, he, Edward, King of England, had, with his own lips, said that " Yea " by which he acknowledged himself vassal of the King of France.

After that ceremony, King Philippe and his courtiers had given the young King of England all he could hold of the honey of sweet speech and rich entertainment, to take the taste of the bitter pill from his mouth. But however the palate of the father may have been sweetened, the teeth of the son were still set on edge ; and he clenched them savagely as he thought of that humiliating homage. Vassals to a king of France for the Duchy of Aquitaine the Kings of England well might be, and without loss of dignity ; but vassals to a Count of Valois, never !

Prince Edward knew that his father had done that thing. But he knew, too, that in after years, when he was become a man grown, he had repented him of his act ; knew that in the year 1337 he had openly taken to himself the title of " King of France " at the Parliament of Westminster of that year ; knew that in 1340 he had publicly quartered the golden fleurs-de-lys on his shield. This he had done at the instigation of Van Artevelde, brewer and dictator of Flanders, who was his chief ally, his " Compère," as he called him. Van Artevelde, for the sake of the English wool trade that was the main source of the great wealth of his country, was more than willing to march with Edward against Philippe ; but his goodwill was somewhat hampered by a vow made by the people of Flanders to the Pope, never to make war upon a King of France—a vow, moreover, whose breaking was to entail a heavy fine. The situation was embarrassing, especially for one who had a proper affection for good golden florins ; but Van Artevelde found a way out. If Edward himself were King of France,

there could then be no question of a broken vow if he chose to make war on a simple Count of Valois, and still less of the payment of any fine. So Van Arteveldt proclaimed Edward to be, "By the grace of God, King of France." Prince Edward had a knowledge of all these things laid away in his head; and in his heart he bore the conviction that out of the mouth of a Flemish brewer had come the true and just sentence of a righteous God.

King Philippe, too, was not unaware of that sentence; but to him it seemed that there was more of a smell of English wool about it than an odour of sanctity. He remained quite tranquilly seated upon the throne of France, and letters addressed to "Philippe de Valois" were returned to their senders with the equivalent of a post-office stamp, "Unknown at above address," marked across them.

King Edward, nothing daunted, then sent his adversary a challenge to single combat, of which the crown of France was to be the prize. The English king was at that time a turbulent and hot-headed young man of twenty-eight; but King Philippe was in his forty-seventh year, and he had somewhat lost the taste for disporting himself in knightly jousts, however rich the prize offered might be. Moreover, as he pointed out, there seemed to be little enough of a prize reserved for himself, since he stood to win nothing, and to lose that which he already had. But if, he wrote, King Edward would in his turn risk the crown of England, he would accept, though even then the stakes seemed to him to be unequal.

Many held that this was a wise and prudent answer that King Philippe made to his ambitious young rival; but to Prince Edward there could be only one verdict to pass upon it, and that was that Philippe de Valois was a mean-hearted weakling and a coward, unworthy not only of the kingly dignity, but even of his knightly spurs, since he thus openly gave proof that he was afraid to meet King

Edward in a *champ clos*. What King Edward himself thought of it he did not disclose. His Flemish allies had proved unsatisfactory, his attempted invasion of France through Flanders, a costly and a futile thing. So he signed a truce with King Philippe, and for a little held his peace—though he still quartered the golden fleurs-de-lys with the crimson leopards.

Then in the next year, 1341, had come the War of the Breton Succession, when the principle of the Salic law was again debated, Jean de Montfort claiming the duchy against Jeanne de Penthievre, the former being the half-brother of the dead Duke of Brittany, the latter his niece. This time King Edward hotly denied the rights of a female to inherit, and when King Philippe proclaimed Charles de Blois to be the lawful Duke of Brittany in the right of his wife, Jeanne de Penthievre, he at once opened his door to Montfort, the disgruntled candidate for ducal honours, and took up the cudgels most vigorously in his cause. Then had followed two years of bloody skirmishing, which in their turn ended in the Treaty of Malestroit, signed in 1343 at Sainte Madeleine in Brittany.¹

King Edward had signed the treaty, but he had chafed under it. So when, in 1345, King Philippe executed the Breton nobleman, Olivier de Clisson, on a charge of divulging certain secrets to the English, he claimed that Clisson had been an "English" Breton, and that Philippe had outraged him in executing a man who was under the protection of the English crown. He declared to Cardinal Nicolo Canali, sent to him by the Pope Clement VI. in an endeavour to maintain the peace, that since the hereditary rights which, through the mercy of God, had devolved upon him, could only be maintained by force of arms, he was preparing that force, and nothing could turn him from his purpose. Forthwith he sent the Earl of Derby to

¹ For the War of the Breton Succession, see *Black Mastiff*, by the same author.

Gascony to open the campaign in the south, while he himself set about fitting out a great fleet of ships to take him, his young son, and a well-equipped little army to carry reinforcements to his cousin of Derby.

Where would that host land? Anxiously King Philippe asked himself the question. He had sent his eldest son, Jean, Duke of Normandy, and the Duke of Burgundy, with a great army to face the Earl of Derby on the Gascon marches, but he himself waited in Paris, for he knew not at what point of his tremendous coast-line the blow of Edward was aimed.

On the 2nd of July 1346, Edward set sail from Southampton. With him he took his young heir, and a great train of nobles. There were his Marshal, Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick; his Constable, William de Bohun, Earl of Northampton. There were the Earls of Salisbury, of Oxford, of Suffolk, of Arundel, of Huntingdon; the lords Stafford, Darcy, Montagu, Talbot, Cobham, Grey, Lovel, Audley, Morley, Lucy, Burghersh, and Ferrars. Among the knights were Roger Beauchamp, Edmund de Burgh, Walter de Wetewang (who was Treasurer of the Household), Hugh de Hastynges, Roger de Mortimer, Gerard de l'Isle, John Neville, William de Kildesby (Keeper of the Privy Seal), and the well-beloved John Chandos; and to represent the Church, John Hatfield, Bishop of Durham. There, too, was a foreigner of note, Godefroi d'Harcourt, a Norman of noble birth, exiled from France by King Philippe, who suspected him, and not without cause, of treason.

With this fine bevy of knights and nobles there went aboard King Edward's ships some 5000 men-at-arms, 10,000 archers, both mounted and afoot, 4000 Irish and Welsh knife-men, together with the necessary "gynours" who had charge of the siege weapons, the "pioneers" for the building and repairing of roads, the miners for the sapping of enemy walls, and lastly, the little handful of

"gunarii," who had proud charge of those strange new engines of war, the "Bombardeaulx," or cannon, three of which King Edward was taking with him on his expedition. Strange, squat, toad-like things they were, unwieldy to handle, cumbersome to drag along with an army on the march, somewhat futile in battle, where their bark far out-did their bite—but yet the most modern weapons in existence, the latest novelty in warfare, and as such, a source of pride to King Edward, as well as to the brawny men who had charge of them.¹

All that great mass of men and materials Prince Edward saw set aboard his father's ships, and at the sight his heart was content ; for it was a noble host, nobly clad and nobly armed, and all, from the lowliest knife-man to the highest baron, fitting companions to surround him on this, the first virile adventure of his young manhood.

When the last man, the last bale, was on board, King Edward and his son in their turn set foot on the deck of the flag-ship, and the whole fleet, over a thousand sail, beat out to the open sea, heeling over like swooping sea-birds before the freshening breeze. Towards Gascony they trimmed their sails—Gascony, where the Earl of Derby battled against the Dukes of Normandy and Burgundy ; though that destination had been kept a close secret, so that King Philippe might be held inactive in Paris, a prisoner to his lack of knowledge of his enemy's movements, not knowing whither to hurry with the mighty shield of his armies, since he knew not where he was threatened. Towards Gascony, then, the prows of the ships were turned. But the wind that had helped them so bravely out of harbour turned traitor now, and would not let them pass. In vain they battled against it, and at last, exhausted by their profitless struggle, they took refuge under the lee of the Isle of Wight.

King Edward held a council there, to decide what was

¹ For evidence of cannon with the army of King Edward, see Appendix, page 259.

to be done, since the winds of heaven said them nay. The wiser of the heads about that council-table were for waiting until such time as the winds should be pleased to say "Yea," as in the nature of things they must in the end. The Earl of Derby needed their help, and it were better to bring that help late than not at all. All would have seemed to be agreed on the wisdom of the course proposed, when up rose Godefroi d'Harcourt, the renegade Frenchman, and he held a different speech. A war on the borders of Gascony was well enough in its way, as was anything else that could bring trouble upon King Philippe, who had driven him into exile and who, because he was his own countryman, he hated with a more bitter hatred than any man can feel against a foreign foe. He would wound King Philippe closer to the heart than in far-away Gascony; and because King Philippe had driven him from his home, he offered up that home to the ravaging of an invading army. In the place of Gascony, he offered Normandy. For the sake of revenge, for the sake of his injured pride, he would give up Normandy to fire and sword and pillage, to all the nameless horrors of foreign invasion—he, a Norman. More, he offered to guide the steps of the destroyer, since he knew the country well, being one of its children. Unabashed he stood before the king and spoke, and his speech was glib, persuasive, tempting.

"The country," he said, "is one of the fattest and most fertile in the world, and I swear to you on my head that if you go there, you will take land at your pleasure. For the humble folk of Normandy have never borne arms, and all the chivalry of the country lies now with the Duke of Normandy before Aiguillon in Gascony. And you will find in Normandy great and rich towns, open and undefended, where your people will have such profit as they will feel the benefit of twenty years from now." ¹

¹ All the dialogue in this book is extracted from contemporary, or nearly contemporary, sources.

At the words, King Edward's face lit up with an expression half mischievous, half cruel, like that of a school-boy tempted to some unholy prank against a little-loved elder ; but his son's face was that of a young fanatic who will attain the end that seems to him to be good, must he wade through a sea of blood and pain to reach it. Neither father nor son heard anything of pathos in that saying of d'Harcourt's : " The humble folk of Normandy have never borne arms." They saw nothing of the horror of a simple, kindly farmer-folk delivered as helpless to the harvester of Death as the ruddy apples of their own orchards, since in all their peaceful lives they had never seen war, had never learned the grim lesson of how to bear arms in their own defence. To King Edward it meant only that this delightful prank of destroying his enemy's property would be so much the easier of accomplishment ; to Prince Edward it meant that God opened the way to the abasement of the usurper, since He had permitted only this feeble barrier, a mob of worthless peasants, to lie in the road of His justice.

Many of the older members of that Council shook their grey beards at the new and daring proposal. Let the King go to Gascony, they urged. There he would be upon his own ground, fighting a legitimate fight for the safe-keeping of his lawful boundaries ; and if those boundaries must yet be enlarged somewhat less lawfully, then let it be done with the whole of a friendly country at their backs to support them. This business of a march through Normandy, into the heart of France itself, could be no better than a monster raid, paid for at the most with a few waggon-loads of loot, and the burning resentment and hatred of a people who had so far looked upon the doings of their betters with an easy indifference. That, at the best—and at the worst, the annihilation of a costly army, and a King of England chased to earth by a King of France—always granting that he were lucky enough to reach his earth in safety. For while the army of France might be

busy with the siege of Aiguillon in the south, King Philippe had so great a kingdom as could supply him with a dozen more, and that would do so right willingly, once the foot of the invader touched her soil. The grey-beards thought of these things, and the thought misliked them. But King Edward was no grey-beard—he was a young and a lusty man of thirty-three, proud-hearted, reckless of danger, violent. He was a Plantagenet, a royal gerfalcon, such as would rather die under the beak and claws of an eagle than bring a hundred flapping herons down to earth.

King Edward looked at Godefroi d'Harcourt and laughed—for here was a huntsman who offered him game worthy of his hunting, and who in consequence richly deserved the reward he would give him—the marshalship of the army of England. He looked at his son and smiled proudly, for here was an occasion to blood the lad right royally. Godefroi d'Harcourt looked at the glowing, radiant face of the father, at the dark, intense face of the son, and he, too, smiled—for here were a leopard and a leopard-cub that bade fair to do more than claw futilely at the hem of the blue robe of Philippe of France.

So, on this 12th day of July, one day out from the Isle of Wight, Edward, Prince of Wales, stood far forward in the prow of the flagship, straining his eyes towards France, while behind him on the deck, his father made a gallant clamour with his lute and his voice. Yet with the eyes and ears of his body the young Prince neither saw nor heard, for the ears of his mind were full of that speech of Godefroi d'Harcourt's, the eyes of his memory saw only the Norman's exulting smile, a smile that of a sudden had changed and twisted into a bitter grimace, as though some nerve of his body had twinged with sharp, unbearable pain. Steadily his senses looked at and listened to those sights and sounds; and it was only the clamour of the look-out at the mast-head, a touch on his shoulder, that

brought him back to the present, to the clear voice of the watch crying, "Land! Land!" and to the sight of his father standing beside him, pointing forward with eager hand to where the white coast of France shouldered its way up out of the grey waters of the Channel.

To whoever might glance at them with casual eye, they would seem to be, the father and the son, as alike as two apples from the same tree; but to him who would look beyond their outward seeming, they were as different as the sun and the moon. Both were of handsome carriage, both were blue of eye, and with hair "neither red nor yellow, but a fair mixture of silver and gold." Both were lusty of body and comely, with the fierce beauty that was the birthright of their race—that strange race of Plantagenets, made up of sunshine and shadow, of blinding heat and bitter cold. An uneasy breed, sprung from the unnatural mating of those eternal enemies, Anjou and Normandy. For generations those two great houses had stood side by side, locked together by their boundary-line, riven apart by a deadly animosity, a blood feud of implacable rivalry and ambition. Rivalry had held them apart, ambition had brought them together at the last, and Normandy had given her hand in loveless wedlock to Anjou. The two enemy houses had become one, and men had given to it the name of "Plantagenet."

To all appearances, that new house was a great stone pile of strength and beauty; but inwardly it was an anomaly, a house divided against itself, but that yet did not fall. Those who had been born of the wedding of Normandy and Anjou had welded together the outer walls of the two great houses, so that it would seem as though the two had become one; but inwardly, they had never been able to widen the narrow breach in the dividing wall through which Normandy had entered into the bridal chamber of Anjou. Joined together outwardly the two

houses might be, but inwardly, never. Inwardly they kept their dual character, and never could the sun of Normandy penetrate that dividing wall to lighten the shadows of the dark Angevin nature, never could the cold shadows of Anjou temper the blazing heat of Norman blood. So that those who dwelt within that double house called Plantagenet must either have their blood set on fire by the fierce sun in the hall of Normandy, or they must withdraw entirely to the heart-chilling shadows of the chamber of Anjou. Never might their souls know the peace of moderation, never their minds the tranquillity of the middle course. They might be scorched with the heat, or chilled with the cold; but never might they be at rest.

Father and son, they stood shoulder to shoulder and watched the Norman coast change from a dim, misty cloud on the horizon to a sharply defined ridge of white cliff. So close were they now that it seemed to the young prince that he had but to stretch out his hand to touch the forbidding defences of the great port of Cherbourg; so close that almost he could see the terrified townsfolk crowding the walls to count with dismayed eyes the wings of the birds of prey that seemed to be swooping down upon them. But the good folk of Cherbourg were not to be molested as yet. The white-winged flock sought a gentler landing-place than was offered by the thorny defences of the great port. Sweeping past in a flurry of foam, a flash of white sails and multicoloured trailing pennons, the ships made for the inner coast of that long promontory of Normandy that juts like a pointing finger far out into the waters of the channel. With a thunder of shifting canvas, a shrilling of strained cordage, they rounded the promontory and came to rest before St. Vaast de la Hougue, a little town as open and as helpless before them as a sparrow's nest before egg-stealing boys.

St. Vaast was helpless, and yet it showed fight. The local levies came gallantly to the defence of their coast ; but their resistance was no more effective than that of a child's sand-castle to the incoming tide. They were but a handful of simple folk, untrained men : farmers, peasants, fishermen, and serfs. The Earl of Salisbury went ashore and dispersed them without more ado. Prince Edward may have been somewhat envious of the Earl, who was thus the first to set foot on enemy soil ; but he was well aware that the herding of a low-born rabble was not work for such as he. After the good Salisbury had made all clean and fit to receive his royal master, Edward the King took his son and went ashore, and with him went his great train of nobles, and his sturdy little army.

Prince Edward was destined to see many a finer and richer town than was St. Vaast de la Hougue, but few were to leave in his mind a more pleasing memory. For there, in that little port that was scarcely more than a fishing village, he received from his father the golden spurs of chivalry. There, together with a little band of equally favoured youths of his own age—the young Earls of March and Salisbury, John de Montagu and his brother William, Roger de Mortimer and others—he was publicly received into the fraternity of chivalry, was acknowledged to be a man amongst men.

Perhaps he would have wished to receive his white surcoat from the hands of that gracious lady, Queen Philippa, his mother. Doubtless it would have pleased him to peacock it in his new glory before his brothers and sisters in England—the haughty Isabella, the sweet Joan, and Lionel, whose long arms and legs grew out of his doublets and hose as fast as they were put upon him ; and the silent John, who was called by the name of John of Gaunt, after the Flemish town in which he had been born ; and Edmund, and even Mary, who was no more than a little maid of two summers. And certainly he would have

delighted in displaying himself and his knightly spurs to his cousin, Joan.

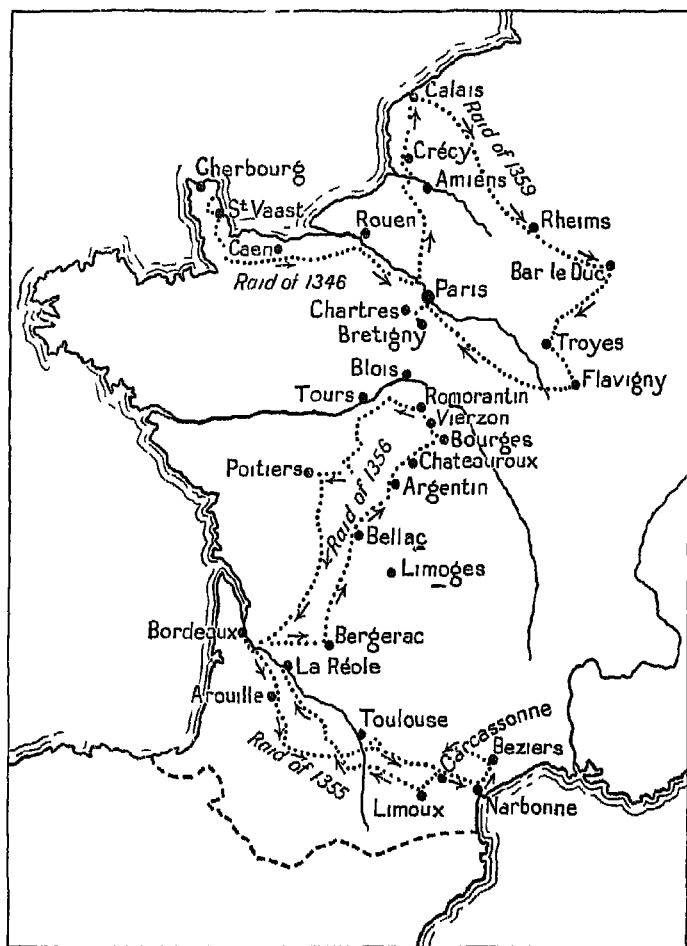
Daughter of that ill-starred Earl of Kent, younger brother of Edward II., executed in 1330 because, forsooth ! he had dared to believe that his murdered brother, the king, might still be alive, she had been received, a fatherless little maid of two years, into the compassionate care of Queen Philippa, and into her generous nursery. There she had dwelt ever since, and there she had made herself boon-companion to little Prince Edward—for being two years his senior and in some way his cousin, she had for him all the advantages of an elder sister, without that irritating assertion of authority with which the older female members of his own family are apt to embarrass a man's life. Moreover, she was good to look upon, was Joan of Kent, and useful for the trying-out of gauche young gallantries—useful, and safe, since she was a cousin.

Yes, it would have been good to parade before the ever-admiring eyes of cousin Joan, and to practise upon her the complicated code of that knightly courtesy with which he must henceforth treat ladies, even his cousin. But there were sterner things in the wind than learning how to keep one's spurs out of a lady's skirts ; for no sooner had the King done with the *adoubement* of his son, than he set about the more serious business for which he was there—that of despoiling King Philippe.

From St. Vaast he sent out raiding parties, to ravage the land and to bring in such horses as they could come by ; and " the English, to disport themselves, put everything to fire and flame." ¹ To King Edward that great conflagration was a merry bonfire, about which he could " disport " himself and his men ; but to Prince Edward, it was a sacrificial fire on the altar of a righteous cause.

All the neighbouring country was laid waste, Barfleur was taken and sacked. Even Cherbourg, that strong

¹ Ch ndos Herald



RAIDS OF 1346, 1355, 1356, AND 1359.

place, they attacked. They took the town and burned it, but the château was too well defended against them ; so after skirmishing about it like dogs about a hedgehog, they left it in peace, and took their way back to St. Vaast.

On the 18th of July, one week after the landing, King Edward gave orders for the opening of the great adventure, the invasion of France. Moving slowly southward they went, taking, almost without resistance, and burning Valognes and St. Come on their way ; and Carentan " was delivered unto them against the will of the soldiers that were within it." ¹ From there, they turned eastwards, pushing on towards the interior of the country. St. Lo they took on the 22nd of July, Sept Vents and Torleval fell in their turn. Marching steadily, slowly, " they took their way through Caux, burning, laying waste, harrying ; whereat the French were sore grieved and cried aloud, ' Where is Philippe our King ? ' " ² King Philippe was in Paris ; and when he heard the news, he exclaimed, " By Saint Paul the valiant, I mistrust treason ! "

Philippe was not a great king, yet he was no coward, nor was he wholly without good sense. But he had not been brought up to the ruling of a great country, for in his youth there had been three healthy young lives between himself and the throne, and it had come to the minds of none that one day he would be called upon to bear the crushing responsibility that now rested upon his shoulders. So that now, in this tragic crisis, he was not unlike some merchant whom men had hastily clad in armour, giving him a heavy sword in one hand and a cumbrous shield in the other, telling him to go forth and protect his home with weapons that were strange to him and that hampered him more than they helped. He seemed not to know how to protect himself with the strong shield of a willing and outraged people, the great sword of his fighting chivalry seemed to be more of a hindrance than anything else in his

¹ Holinshed.

² Chandos Herald.

unskilled hands. None could call him stupid, for he had had the wit to stir up the ever-ready David Bruce of Scotland to create a diversion by an invasion of England ; but King Edward was not one to turn aside from such an adventure as this for a pin-prick in the back. He came steadily on. Nothing but a prompt and energetic intervention of armed force could stop him now ; and that promptness of decision, that energy, seemed to be beyond the powers of King Philippe.

He had been at Rouen when the English march began, and now he hurried to Paris, as though that were the first town he would try to protect against the invader. Once in Paris, he did not seem to know which way to turn. His great armies, it is true, were on the borders of Aquitaine, and beyond recall. But volunteers came to him from the four quarters of his kingdom, ay, and foreigners, too. John, the old blind King of Bohemia, prepared himself without delay ; and when his ministers protested that because of his infirmity he would do better to lie quietly at home, he replied hotly that, blind though he might be, he had not yet forgotten the road to France, and that, for all their protestations, he would go to the aid of his friends. In hot haste he came, and brought with him his son, Charles of Luxembourg, the newly elected King of the Romans. There came, too, the Duke of Lorraine, the Count of Flanders, and the German Counts of Saarbrucken, Blamont, and Salm.

Great nobles, both French and foreign, flocked to Paris ; but once there, King Philippe seems not to have known what to do with them. And in truth he was in a quandary. He feared treason, as the example of Godefroi d'Harcourt had shown him only too plainly he well might do. He dared not quit Paris lest the English in the south drive north, and snatch it behind his back. Yet if he stayed where he was to guard Paris, what then ? Was he to let Edward march at will through his country,

despoiling and laying it waste? Undecided, anguished, he rode unceasingly between Paris and St. Denis. At first the people of Paris had cheered him on his outgoings, for they thought to see him ride back with the great oriflamme of France between his hands. But always he did no more than look upon the sacred banner in its resting-place in the Abbey of St. Denis, and always he came back as empty-handed as he had gone. Then the people began to jeer at him in the streets and to cry out against him, for whatever the failings of their old Capetian kings had been, they had at least ever been men of prompt decision and ready energy, and it seemed to them that this first Valois king of theirs did not measure up to his ancestors. The people of Paris were uneasy, for the English were nearing Caen now, and Caen lay half-way to the capital. It seemed to them that instead of seeking inspiration in the Abbey of St. Denis, their king would have done better to find it in the great army that was now gathered at St. Germain.

Threatened with the loss of so great a place as Caen, King Philippe at last moved—but ineffectually, half-heartedly. He sent his Constable, the Count d'Eu, together with the Count of Tancarville and a small body of troops to the defence of the place; for Caen was an open town, without walls or moats, and garrisoned only by some three hundred Genoese mercenaries, who would have their work cut out for them to protect the château, and would be unable to lift a finger to save the town. Now, neither the Constable nor Tancarville were notably lacking in military skill or in courage; but courage alone cannot take the place of walls and towers, military skill cannot turn a handful of men-at-arms into a formidable army, and it was only such an army that could check King Edward's progress; he would scarcely more than stumble over the inadequate obstacle that King Philippe threw in his way.

And King Edward came on. Slowly and steadily that compact little army advanced, and what had been fair towns and rich farms before it, was blackened ruins and spoiled crops behind. Slowly it came, making no more than five or six miles a day, lest loot or plunder escape its searching hands and eyes. And now before it lay the richest prize in the whole of Normandy: Caen itself. Along the banks of the River Orme it lay, an open town, helpless, holding within it such a mass of rich spoil as in itself would justify the promises of Godefroi d'Harcourt.

Caen was in a turmoil; but the Constable did what he could to bring some measure of order into the seething crowd. He did not shut himself up with his men in the strong château of the place, as captains in such circumstances only too often did, deserting the citizens to their fate—but left the care of the fortress to the Governor of the town, Robert de Mauny, and his three hundred Genoese. He himself did his duty as an honest fighting-man should, ordering the citizenry to take shelter on an island in the river, on which was built a part of the town, while he took such measures as he could, he and his men and the Count of Tancarville, to hold the bridge that gave access to it.

His plan was wise enough, for only in such a narrow pass as that afforded by the bridge, could he hope, with his feeble forces, to bar the way to Edward and his army, and save the townsfolk and that part of the city which lay upon the island.

But rather than obey his orders, the citizens of Caen raised an outcry. Were they not a great host in themselves, and were not their numbers still further swelled by the crowds of fugitives who had been flocking into their town these many days past? Let the Constable but lead them out against the enemy, and they promised to give a good account of themselves. Now the Count d'Eu was no mean soldier, and no inexperienced leader of men; but he had been used to make war on the borders of his country, in

the south against the English, in the north against the Flemings. There, on the uneasy marches of France, the merchant-folk were as used to and as handy at manning a battlement as they were at measuring ells of velvet behind their counters. There the farmers were as hardy at defending their homes against an invader as their orchards against apple-stealing boys. So, seeing the enthusiasm for the fight of the good burghers of Caen, the Constable failed to perceive the difference between those hardy border-dwellers he knew so well and these peaceable folk of Normandy who had "never borne arms." He looked at their number, and listened to their protestations of courage ; and thinking that they were such battle-hardened souls as he might have found in any town of the Artois or Picardy, he led them boldly out against the English.

But alas ! when the English came in sight, it was borne in on the good folk of Caen that it was not so that, in their innocence, they had imagined an attacking army. The English did not rush about in little groups seeking for something to steal, as one might have expected of men on a plundering expedition ; nor did their leaders spur gallantly forward with couched lances, as they had seen knights do in tournaments. No, they came on steadily and in a disquieting silence, these three compact columns of marching men. Disconcerting was their silence, still more disconcerting their apparent indifference to the horde of citizenry that awaited them. Seemingly blind to the weapons that were brandished in their direction, and deaf to the insults that were hurled at them, the English came on. Many a stout shopkeeper began to think then that it might be better to be on the island behind the Constable, than here in the open at his side.

Even as these thoughts came to them, the English, of a sudden, halted ; and the good citizens' hearts rose once more, since it became evident that they had intimidated the enemy by their show of martial valour. They began

to pluck up courage, thinking that all was over—though the Constable could have told them well, that nothing was as yet begun. Exulting, they watched this craven army that did not dare come hand to hand with them, the citizens of Caen ; and watching, they saw a strange thing ; for out in front of those motionless, silent ranks, there stepped a little, thin line of leather-clad, shabby-seeming men ; harmless, certainly, since they bore neither spear nor shield, mace nor axe. But of a sudden there came from the mean, dun-coloured line, a thing that the people of Caen had never seen nor even heard of before—and that was death at two hundred yards.

Men fell then, and not as they fall in the lists, from the blows of a stout lance, but under the drive of slender yew-wands, tipped with steel, and tailed with grey goose-feathers. That the men of Caen saw, and it was a thing new in their experience. Nor did they stay for a further initiation into this thing called warfare and which was not as they had expected to find it. Without tarrying to admire the dexterity of the archers, they turned and fled ; while the English, throwing aside their seeming stolidity of a minute before, came after them, like wolves after a flock of sheep. The Constable and Tancarville might as well have hoped to stay the waters of the Orme with their two bodies, as to stem that wild river of panic. Back into the town of Caen it poured, and the English went with it, like strong swimmers striking through a flood. Friend and foe alike, inextricably mingled, they swept hustling and struggling into the narrow, undefended streets of the town.

Then began such a slaughter, such a welter of blood, such a horror of slaying and wounding as it is not good for any man to look upon. But the men of Caen—ay, and the women too—showed that at least they were not wholly craven. To stand and be still before the terror of the English archers might be beyond them ; but when it came

to a breast-to-breast defence of their own door-sills, their own hearth-stones, they showed that they were men, as will any human creature with the rudiments of a soul in his bosom. They barricaded their doors, they hurled their furniture, chairs, tables, chests, anything that came to their hands, down onto the heads of the invaders. And when those ill-defended doors gave way before foot and shoulder, they dragged up the paving-stones of their own floors, while their wives brought scalding water from the kitchens, the very embers from the hearths, to hurl in the faces of those who forced an entry into their homes. But paving-stones and red-hot coals can do but little against armed men, and the dreadful slaughter went on.

Prince Edward saw the unleashing of his father's men against the screaming mob, but the sight left him as indifferent as the smashing of flies with a switch. The people were his father's disobedient subjects, in open rebellion against his royal authority, and they must expect to suffer the punishment of their sins. He had seen the Constable d'Eu and the Count of Tancarville taken alive, and of that he was glad, since it would be a pity for men of such noble birth as theirs to be done to death in any such unknightly affair as this. As for the people, they must take such chastisement as the king saw fit to mete out ; but that chastisement was work for common soldiers, and not for the soiling of such hands as his. He sat his horse beside his father, and watched.

But there was one who did not look upon the awful killing with so calm an eye, and that man was Godefroi d'Harcourt, the Norman. Ashen-faced he came and begged of the King that he stop the horror ; but King Edward was at his mischief, and no twaddle of divine mercy could turn him from it. Then, despair in his heart because of this dreadful thing that he himself had brought about, but that his imagination had not been able to see as his sickened eyes now saw, he made yet another effort

to save these, his fellow-countrymen. He appealed this time not to the adventurer, but to the King. These men, he said, were desperate; and a desperate man can accomplish things beyond his courage or his strength in other circumstances. Undoubtedly, the citizens of Caen were helpless before the King's wrath, and he could destroy them and their city like ants in an ant-hill, if such was his good pleasure. But even ants will pit their feeble strength against that of the despoiler, and their sting is not to be despised. What, then, if the King emptied Caen of every living soul within it? In a few weeks, a few months, it would be as populous as ever. But what if he lost even so few as ten good men in carrying out his purpose? Any thinned ranks in Edward's army must needs remain so, since English men-at-arms do not grow on Norman apple trees. Let the King then spare his own men, since they were irreplaceable, let him spare the men of Caen, since they were of value to no one; and let him spare the town, since it contained such a wealth of loot as would make a king's ransom.

King Edward listened then—and he did more than listen, he stopped the slaughter, caused such fires as had already broken out to be quenched. Not another drop of blood was to be shed, he ordered, not another door to be burst in. The looting of the town was to be done thoroughly and systematically, but without violence. And when the burghers of Caen heard those orders, they ceased from being lion-hearted defenders of their homes, and became again their natural selves. Let Edward take anything, everything—so that he leave them their homes and their bodies unharmed, Edward took everything.

For three days the stripping of the city went on, the King reserving for his share all the jewels, the plate, and all the fine woven stuffs for which the place was so justly famed. "And the town and the subbarbus unto the

bare wallys of all thing that myghte be bore and carryed out, was robbid and despoyled." ¹

All that great mass of plunder Edward sent down the Orme to the sea where his fleet, left in charge of the Earl of Huntingdon, cruised along the coast. With it he sent three hundred of the richest citizens of Caen, together with the Constable and the Count of Tancarville, whose ransoms would be well worth the having. One more thing he sent to England, and that was a parchment bearing the date 1339, and in which the good folk of Normandy offered the King of France to invade England, unaided and at their own expense, thinking doubtless that what man—or at least Norman—had done before, he could do again. This Edward sent, being certain of its effects upon his people, who perhaps looked on this adventure of his with a not entirely favourable eye. But let those same people be persuaded that they had been in danger of so unjust and so barbarous a thing as a foreign invasion, and they would view his own doings with the utmost enthusiasm. So, feeling that justification after the event was better than no justification at all, Edward added the incriminating document to his burden of loot for England; and there have been men to say that this same document owed its origin to the pen, or at least to the lips, of Edward himself. But of that there can be no knowing.

All these multitudinous affairs attended to, Edward left Caen, or rather "the bare wallys" of that unhappy town, on the 30th of July. He left, too, the château intact, for that, with its great stone walls and its garrison of Genoese, with Robert de Mauny the governor, would have been a hard nut to crack, and one containing but little, and unpalatable meat.

King Edward moved off east in leisurely fashion, as slow but as devastating in his march as a flow of lava.

¹ *The Pry* !

Nothing that would burn was left intact, nothing that could be carried away was left behind. And so, in a three days' unhurried march, he came to Lisieux. There he came upon the first signs of any activity on the part of King Philippe ; for at Lisieux he was met by two cardinals, Etienne Aubert and Annibale Ceccano, who came to offer him terms for the ending of this disastrous warfare. The offer made to him was that he should hold the Duchy of Aquitaine on the same terms as his father and his grandfather before him had held it. Here, indeed, was a substantial gain for this somewhat objectless raid of his, for, with a stroke of the pen and without the loss of a man, he could make good all the losses incurred during the reign of his unhappy father. But he would not. Surely he could not have thought that the loss to King Philippe of a few towns and the gain to himself of a few waggon-loads of loot, were of weightier import than the bloodless acquisition of wide territories and great towns in the south ; so it may be that he was simply enjoying himself, and would not be drawn from this glorious sport of war to the arid business of treaty-making. For whatever reason, he refused—and perhaps, in his heart, King Philippe was not disappointed at that refusal.

For King Edward was penetrating deeper and deeper into enemy country, leaving the coast and safety ever farther and farther behind him ; and the army King Philippe now gathered about him became every day more formidable in its great numbers. King Edward still moved east, but even he began to see now that this game had lasted long enough, and he would do well to strike north, making for the coast and safety. He obliqued then to the left, feeling for the Seine and a crossing ; but before Elbœuf he was checked, for he found that at Rouen, a few miles to the north and on the banks of the Seine, the people had taken the defence of their country into their own hands, since apparently Philippe would not do so, and had cut the bridges.

The army turned east once more, following the course of the Seine, seeking for a way to cross ; but at every point the little towns had followed the lead of their great sister Rouen, and everywhere the bridges were down. Edward could do no more than burn the towns about their inhabitants' ears to teach them better manners towards a King of England, and go on his way, ever seeking a passage and never finding it. Pont de l'Arche was burned thus, and the fair town of Vernon. Mantes was his next hope, but there he found the same answer to his questing—destroyed bridges.

Then King Edward's manner changed. He was no longer an overgrown boy on a picnic, he was a king with the honour of his country upon his shoulders, a general with the safety of his troops between his hands. He could not turn back along the desolated way he had come, he could not cross the river ; he must go on. On he went, and now he was at Poissy, not a day's march from Paris itself. At Poissy his eyes lit up with a fierce joy. The bridge was down, but this had been no flimsy wooden affair, but a sturdy structure of stone ; and plainly visible above the waters of the Seine he could see the heads of the stout stone piers that had supported it.

Here was a way of escape from the trap ; here was safety. But he must have time. He was almost under the walls of Paris, almost within sight of Philippe's huge army—and let him be caught between that army and the Seine, and he would be smashed like a fly against a wall. He must put the river between himself and Philippe without loss of time. Here, indeed, before him were the rudiments of a bridge, but his engineers could not make it fit for the passage of his troops and his heavy waggons in a few short hours. Nevertheless, although the day was a Sunday, he set them to work without the loss of a minute. Then, perhaps to distract attention from his activities at the bridge of Poissy, he sent out raiding parties, to destroy

whatever might come under their hands. St. Germain they burned, and St. Cloud—and the smoke of their burning must have been plainly visible to the anxious citizens of Paris, and the still more anxious Philippe.

Edward himself lay at Auteuil, and there he received from Philippe a challenge to give him battle, on "this day, Saturday, Sunday, or Tuesday" (Philippe evidently having previous engagements for Friday and Monday), either between St. Germain des Près and Vaugirard, or between Franconville and Pontoise. But Edward was no longer the Norman brigand-chief, he was the subtle Angevin captain; and he had no intention of being flattened between the anvil of the Seine and the hammer of the French army, nor did the prospect of falling a prisoner—he, the King of England—between the hands of Philippe of France hold any attractions for him.

He replied to the challenge of "Philippe de Valois" with a not overly polite refusal. "We make known to you," he wrote, "that trusting in God and the evident right we have to the Crown of France, which you occupy wrongly and to our disinheritance, against God and all justice, we are come, without pride or presumption, into our Kingdom of France . . . to chastise our rebels and to comfort our faithful friends, whom you wrongfully claim to be your subjects." He had been for three days at Poissy, he pointed out, and had Philippe so desired he could have met him there; but since he had not done so he, Edward, was not "minded to accept either place or day of battle." This letter he sealed and dispatched to Philippe, but at the same time telling his messenger to hint to the French that the goal of the English lay rather in the south than in the north.

King Philippe swallowed the bait. He was like many another man of undecided character, sitting hesitating and wavering until circumstances themselves forced him into movement, and then acting with such unthinking

haste and rashness as the youngest esquire would not be guilty of. So was it with King Philippe. Stung by the insult of Edward's letter, terrified by the smoke of burning towns that blew over the very walls of Paris, smarting under the taunts of the citizens of the capital, he gathered up his great army and without so much as assuring himself of the true movements of the English, went thundering south. King Edward slipped across the Seine.

King Edward was across the Seine and away, with twenty-four hours start in his favour. But twenty-four hours was none too much, for Philippe, when he found how he had been fooled, would come storming after him ; and the passage of French troops through friendly country would be a more rapid business than that of the English, enemies in a hostile land. Moreover, even as he had been menaced by the Seine before, so now was he menaced by the Somme. At all costs, he must cross it before the French came up with him. He must march light and rapidly ; and there on the banks of the Seine he burned thirty-two of his great waggons, laden with ballistas and the heavier siege-weapons.

He divided his army into three columns, of which the Marshals led the left and right, while he himself with his son marched with the centre. The vanguard was placed under the leadership of Godefroi d'Harcourt, because of his knowledge of the country.

On the 16th of August, the race for the Somme and safety began ; for this was no longer a leisurely march of invasion, but a desperate though sternly disciplined run for the Channel ports and safety. King Edward was no longer a laughing, overgrown boy, hugely pleased with his mischief. He was a stern, hard-eyed leader of men, a capable and responsible captain of a great army. No longer did his eyes look merrily forward to see what next

he might spoil, but were cast over his shoulder, anxious lest they see the dust of Philippe's tremendous pursuit rise like smoke against the horizon behind him.

There was no straying to the left or the right now, no turning aside to loot a rich town or a prosperous farm. Kept sternly to their ranks under the blazing August sun, the three compact little columns pressed forward, seeming of as little consequence in the vast silence of the summer weather as caterpillars on a dusty road. Past Pontoise they went, and lay that night at Grisy. Then on to Auneuil. Gone were the slow, easy marches of six or seven miles a day. Edward demanded twelve, thirteen, even fifteen miles a day from his men, and got it. On the 18th of August they lay at Troussères, on the 19th at Sommereaux—and still there was no sign of that ominous cloud of pursuit behind them. Only once were Edward's stern orders disobeyed, when, near Beauvais, the rich abbey of St. Lucian proved too great a temptation to some of his soldiers, who turned aside to loot and burn it. The justice of the king was sudden and terrible, and twenty men were executed at his orders—not so much for despoiling a sacred edifice, as for delaying the order of the march.

On the 20th August, Edward was at Airaines, within striking distance of the Somme, and he began to breathe more freely. But his relief was short-lived, for at the same time he learned that the French van, under Jacques de Bourbon, Count de la Marche, was almost upon him. Hastily he sent out Godefroi d'Harcourt and the Earl of Warwick with 1000 men-at-arms and 2000 archers, to try to force one of the passages of the Somme. At Pont-Remi they tried first, but the inhabitants sallied out and drove them off. Then, taking vengeance by burning Fontaine-sur-Somme, they flung themselves upon Long-Pré, with a like result. In despair they rode on Picquigny, but without better luck. Finding that they could in no way wrest the keys of the Somme from the hands of its

guardians, they fell back, disgruntled, upon the main body.

King Edward must have felt something like despair in his heart at their fruitless return, for the noise of the coming of Jacques de Bourbon was already loud in his ears, and he had no choice but to fly on before him, following the course of the Somme, and hoping against hope for a passage. Fly he did, making for Abbeville, and such was the haste with which he quitted Airaines that when the French entered it, hot upon his trail, they were able to profit by the meals of the English, still smoking upon the tables.

Edward had no choice but to march westwards along the banks of the Somme, feeling always for a crossing, but never finding it. The French were almost at his heels now, and, as he hurried on westwards, the stream grew wider and wider, a ford more and more unlikely. At Picquigny, the river and the bordering swamp-land had been five hundred yards wide—already a serious affair—but at Abbeville it was nearer a thousand. Nevertheless, he made ready to try Abbeville. With two hundred men behind him, he rode to the heights of Caubert, from whence he could look down on the town. But the place was strongly fortified and the Governor, Colart de Ver, sallied out hardily at the head of his people, and Edward had perforce to retire, for the folk of Abbeville were of a different metal to those of Caen. Warwick and d'Harcourt then advanced to the very gates of the town, but they were beaten off with a loss of five hundred men and many prisoners. Abbeville was not to be taken, and the retreat went on.

Edward's horizon was black in very truth now, for it looked indeed as if he would be caught in the angle of the river-mouth and the coast, and pounded to pieces or driven into the sea. He was at Boismont now,¹ where the river

¹ For the identification of Froissart's "Oisemont" with the much more plausible "Boismont," I am indebted to Mr. Hilaire Belloc's conclusive little book, *Crécy*.

with its swampy shores was some two thousand yards wide—the last chance at a crossing, and seemingly impossible. In vain he appealed to the cupidity of the country-folk with offers of a rich reward if they would but show him a ford—none would listen to him. The King's anxiety increased, but he gave no signs of it; and when his men gave tongue to their own uneasiness, he answered them confidently, saying, "Seigneurs, be not dismayed. We have, with the help of God, passed by many perilous ways; and still am I certain that God, the Mother of God, and Monseigneur Saint George, have found a passage for us, though I know not where."

Then, as though indeed the great ones of Heaven were on his side, there was brought to him a prisoner, taken at Mons-en-Vimieux, a peasant, named Gobin Agache. The fellow, in return for a reward of one hundred pieces of gold and the lives of twenty of his comrades, offered to deliver the secret of the ford. One hundred pieces of gold was a great fortune for a poor peasant, but Edward did not haggle over the price; time was too short. He bade the man take his money and his friends, and speak.

"Sire," said Gobin, "in the name of God, I promise you, and at the risk of my head, that I will take you to such a place where you and your host may cross the River Somme without danger; and there are certain places in the passage where twelve men abreast could pass twice between day and night, and would not have water above their knees; for when the tide comes in, it chokes the river so that nobody could pass; but when the tide, which comes twice between night and day, is all gone back, the river remains so small there that one can easily pass on foot and on horse. This can be done nowhere but there, except at the bridge of Abbéville, which is a strong city, large, and well filled with soldiers. And the said passage, Sire, has a bottom of white stone, hard and strong, on which you can drive firmly; and for this reason it is called the

'Blanche Tache.' " Then he showed him the position of the ford, and " the noble king would not have been more joyous if someone had given him 20,000 écus." ¹

Thus, for one hundred pieces of gold, Gobin Agache betrayed his country. But it must not be forgotten that at the same time, he saved the lives of twenty of his countrymen ; and doubtless his village cronies had a much more real value in his eyes than any half-legendary king out of Paris.

Early on the morning of the 24th of August, a Thursday, Prince Edward sat his horse beside his father and looked out over the river, some seventy feet below. The great stream still ran high, a huge mass of water, seemingly uncrossable ; but even as he looked he saw, beginning to show wanly through the dark water, like the Milky Way in a summer's sky, the pale streak of the road to salvation, the ford of the Blanche Tache. Gobin Agache had spoken truly. But another thing he saw too, and that was a glint of arms on the far side of the river.

King Philippe had not been able to catch his English prey, but by swiftly riding messengers he had alerted a Norman captain of his, Godemar de Fay, and bidden him hold the fords of the Somme until he could come up and deal with the invader. Godemar, with some 3000 men, had followed up King Edward's march on the far side of the river, and now, seeing their obvious intention of fording by the Blanche Tache, he had hastened forward to dispute the crossing. King Edward acted rapidly, for he must not lose this last chance of gaining the safety of the farther shore, and the tide would not wait for him. He deployed his archers along the banks of the river on either side of the ford, then detaching a picked body of men-at-arms, placed them under the leadership of the Earl of Northampton, Edward le Despenser, and Reginald Cobham, and sent them across the ford.

¹ Jehan le Bel.

Godemar de Fay was a lusty and an experienced fighter—but this time he was over-eager. Rather than wait for the English, and take them as they came out of the water and struggled up the banks of the river, he rode boldly forward until his horses were breast-deep in the water, and there met the enemy. Perhaps, even so ill-placed as he was, he might have held his own, sword to sword—but the English archers, deployed out to the left and the right on the far side of the river, behind their knights in the ford, opened fire with their terrible weapons. The horses of the Frenchmen plunged madly under the unaccustomed sting of the arrows, and many of them went down, carrying their armour-weighted riders to certain death beneath the waters. The struggle was fierce while it lasted, but it was soon over, for the rapid and unerring fire of the English archers was irresistible, and Godemar de Fay was forced to draw off with his men, leaving the way clear.

Then the main body of the English army came down to the river, and the crossing began. First went the archers with the Irish and Welsh infantry behind them, then Warwick and d'Harcourt and the men-at-arms, then the King and Prince Edward and the Bishop of Durham, with the remainder of the men-at-arms following on behind.

Prince Edward, on the far side of the river, looked on smiling; for it was indeed a pretty trick they had played upon the French. There were only the baggage-waggons to be snatched across the ford now, and all would be well, for the tide was already on the turn, and the Somme was shutting its door through which they had escaped so narrowly. Watching the cumbersome waggons being coaxed onto the ford, Prince Edward suddenly raised his eyes to the heights behind them, and a cry of dismay broke from his lips, for there, crowding up against the sky like sunset-dyed clouds over the edge of a mountain, came surging up the banners of France. It was Jacques de Bourbon, with King Philippe's vanguard.

Jacques de Bourbon did not stay to mourn over the royal prize that had so narrowly escaped his eager clutch, but resolutely snatched at that which still lay within his reach—the English baggage-train. Like an avalanche he and his men came plunging down the hill, and like an avalanche they blotted out the slight resistance that met them. Such guards and drivers as were agile enough escaped by way of the ford, while the baggage-train went up in smoke.

The English army had escaped through the rapidly closing door of the Somme, but it had had its tail badly pinched in the doing—for the burned waggons had contained all that was left to it of food, and there would be many an empty English belly that night. While as for Jacques de Bourbon, he found the door slammed to before his nose, for the tide had turned again now, and there was nothing else for him to do but to make his way back to where King Philippe waited impatiently for news of the whereabouts of the English.

Edward had put the river between himself and the French, and he had gained a full day's respite; for the ford of the Blanche Tache was closed, and in any case, was too narrow to allow the rapid crossing of the huge army of King Philippe, and there was no other course for the French king to take but make his way back to Abbeville, and cross over by the great stone bridges of that town.

King Edward had snatched his horse and his infantry, even his artillery, from between the jaws of the trap—but he had lost his supply-waggons, and it was with tightened belts that his men marched that afternoon, steadily north, making for the Straits of Dover and safety. Yet, for all the hunger of his men, they still had energy enough to assault and take the Château of Noyelles. Then they pushed on, the monotony of the afternoon being broken

by a hopeless but gallant attempt of Godemar de Fay to retrieve his honour, which he judged to have been lost at the Blanche Tache. But the honour of the Norman knight was doomed to go unavenged, for Edward's army on the march was not to be turned aside by a handful of spears, however valiant.

That night the English made camp on the edge of the forest of Crécy.

On the next day, Friday, the 25th of August, they pushed on. Their hunger was somewhat assuaged, for a raiding party, under Edward le Despenser, had taken and pillaged Crotoy. The provisions seized there had not been sufficient to bring upon them any of the inconveniences of overeating, but a light stomach makes for light heels, and the desperate flight for the sea went on.

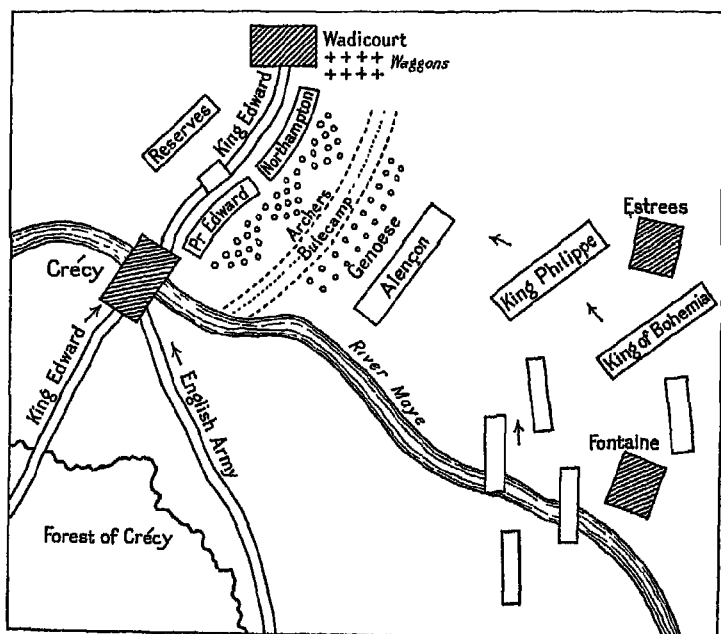
King Edward, the Prince, and their suites, cut through the Forest of Crécy itself, while the bulk of the army took the main road, farther to the east, which skirted about the edge of the forest. But as Edward rode out of the Forest of Crécy, he saw something that straightway drove the obsessing thought of the sea and safety from his mind. There before him was a position of such strategic excellence as would have tempted the most prudent of men to try the fortunes of battle—and the prudence of Edward of England was a short-lived thing at the best, and now it died without a struggle, as his eyes dwelt upon the details of the landscape before him. There lay a long, gently sloping stretch of open land, broad at its beginning, but narrowing down like the neck of a bottle at its north-western extremity. This narrow outlet was barred across by a ridge of high land, along the crest of which ran a road uniting two towns, that stood one on either side of the bottle-neck; while in front of the road was a narrow valley, forming a natural trench before the natural earth-works of the ridge. Crécy and Wadicourt were the

two towns, and the valley that ran between, that of Bulecamp.

At the sight of this God-given fortress, all thoughts of prudent retreat vanished like morning mist from Edward's mind. There, on the ridge of high land between Crécy and Wadicourt, with the Valley of Bulecamp before him, he turned fiercely at bay, the flame of battle rising up within him. And that flame, which made the blue eyes of the father burn like sapphires, must have kindled the impatient heart of the son like a flung torch in a hay-stack. For surely this business of strategic retreat, in which he had shown nothing but his newly won golden spurs to the enemy, must have galled that young but ardent warrior beyond endurance. But it was not the spurs on his heels that he would show to that impertinent upstart, Philippe de Valois, now; it was the blazon on his breast; that blazon on which the crimson leopards of England were brazenly quartered with the golden fleurs-de-lys of France. Looking at the burning eyes of the King, the Prince may well have exulted. He had lost the efficient general and wise ruler, intent only on saving the army and the heir of England—but he had found his father again.

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Meanwhile King Philippe, who had already lost a full day in the matter of getting his army over the Somme, at last came storming on across the great stone bridges of Abbeville. Like a huge pack of hounds hard on the trail came the French, but the scent was already cold. And such was their impatience that they could not wait for their scouts to come in, but went hurtling off at full tilt, and in the wrong direction. It was not until they had reached Tetre, two leagues out of their way, that they discovered their error. And thus Philippe, in his mad efforts to save time, only managed to lose it, as a thirsty man snatching at a cup spills half its contents in his over-



BATTLE OF CRÉCY.

hasty eagerness to drink. But he had found the track now, and he dashed on.

This was no well-ordered, compact, sternly disciplined march such as Edward's had been ; it was a wild, mad, helter-skelter race, each baron, each knight, each sergeant vying with his fellows, and bloodying his spurs in his wild effort not to be outstripped, to be the first to come upon the enemy. Knights outdistanced their esquires, the great seigneurs outdistanced their banners—while the King's young brother, Alençon, outdistanced everybody.

What with the glare of the flaming August sun on arms and armour, and the great clouds of dust that rolled up, it seemed as if the whole land of Picardy were being devoured by a raging, racing prairie fire.

Arrived as far as Marcheville, Philippe sent forward d'Aubigny, Miles de Noyers, the Marshal de Beaujeu, and the monk of Bazèle to bring him news. These soon came back with word that " this English army, that was thought to be in retreat, was halted and waiting in good order of battle." ¹ Surely such news as that would have given pause to the humblest of sergeants ; but to King Philippe, with the responsibility for all that great host upon his shoulders, it was no more than an added reason for haste. The headlong rush went on.

On Saturday, the 26th of August, King Edward set his forces in battle array along the ridge of high ground behind the valley of Bulecamp. His left wing, under Northampton, with Arundel, Lords Willoughby, Basset, and Roos, lay against the village of Wadicourt, with a park of waggons to protect its flank. The right wing he placed under the nominal command of his son, with such seasoned captains as the Earls of Warwick and Oxford, and Godefroi d'Harcourt to uphold him, and the town of Crécy and the little river Maye to guard his flank. The centre he held in

¹ *Histoire des Mayeurs d'Abbeville.*

reserve, a little to the rear, and himself took command of it. In front of the whole were placed the terrible English archers, ranked in V-shaped formations, the points jutting forward, so as to allow as many as possible to be front-rank men, unhampered in their fire by the intervening bodies of their fellows.

When everything was thus ordered and arranged, all set foot to ground, and, "sitting on their shields, awaited the grace of Our Lord and the victory of the battle."¹

From noon when, sitting thus upon their shields, they ate such food as they had, until five o'clock, they waited, the young Prince with the rest. Feverish with impatience, as well as with the heat of his black armour, proudly worn for the first time under the blazing August sun of that day, he waited, doing what he could to imitate the calm presence of his father who, clad in a gold-embroidered green velvet doublet, and with only a white wand in his hand, strode back and forth among the ranks of his men, encouraging and cheering them as they sprawled, resting, upon the grass.

As the sun began to drop, a violent thunderstorm came up, dragging its opaque, grey veil of rain slowly up the long slope of land, and drenching everything it touched, so that the English archers were constrained to unslip the strings from their bows and coil them inside their hats, lest they be dampened and rendered useless. The sun was hidden, the day darkened; and Prince Edward must have begun to fear that he might yet be forced to possess his soul with such small patience as he could until the morrow—when of a sudden the sun blazed out again, splitting the storm apart as though two heavy curtains had been swept aside; and from between them, the chivalry of France came through.

During that rainstorm the old King of Bohemia had begged of King Philippe that he would pass that night at the town of Estrées, that lay at the wider end of the field—for, blind though he was, the aged warrior could yet see

¹ Bourgeois de Valenciennes.

the danger of that bottle-necked trap into which their wild ride was carrying them. There, he argued, King Philippe could rest his men, wearied with many hours of hard riding, and there he could take council with his captains, reconnoitre the English positions, and wait for his stragglers to come up; especially his infantry, which had been left far behind in the wild chase, save only the Genoese crossbowmen who, professionally trained mercenaries that they were, had kept pace with the mounted men. They had gallantly kept pace with the mounted men, but they were exhausted for all that, and moreover, their weapons were soaked with rain.

But neither Philippe nor any of his seigneurs would listen to such wise advice as that of the old King of Bohemia. They had chased their prey through many long days, and now that he was within their grasp, would not sit tamely down and let him slip away from them in the night—nor would they let it be said that their great host had been daunted by so weak a quarry no sooner did it turn at bay—so, “riding forward through pride and envy, without order, the one before the other, they rode until they saw the English ranged in three battles, who waited for them.”¹

Prince Edward, in his black armour, saw the great oncoming of the chivalry of France, and his heart must have leaped within him, for it was indeed a noble sight, and a host worthy of his first pitched battle. For there he saw the banners of Charles, Count of Alençon, brother of the King; of Philippe, Count of Blois, his nephew. There were the blazons of Counts d’Harcourt, Louis of Namur, Aumale, Ferez, Auxerre, Sancerre, Nevers, Bar, Saint-Pol; and there was the Dauphin of Auvergne.² There, too, were

¹ Jehan le Bel.

² “Dauphin”—originally a title such as count or marquis. First borne by an heir to the French throne when, in 1349, Philippe VI. purchased the Dauphiné from Humbert II., Dauphin of the Viennois, who had lost his son at Crécy. The King conferred it upon his grandson Charles, later Charles V., who then took the title of “Dauphin.”

the foreign allies : Count Louis of Flanders, Rodolf, Duke of Lorraine, and the Germans, the Counts of Saarbrucken, Blamont, and Salm. And nobler still, there were four kings : Philippe of France ; John, King of Bohemia ; Charles his son, King of the Romans ; and Don Jayme of Aragon, King of Majorca.

Prince Edward saw this royal host, and so, too, did the good folk of Crécy, and they bethought them of an old prophecy, written upon parchment some 150 years earlier, and conserved in the Abbey of St. Riquier. In this ancient document it was stated that in the year 1346, five suns would appear above Bulecamp, and that a great eclipse would come of their meeting. The five suns—the five crowned heads of Edward, Philippe, John, Charles, and Jayme—were risen. The eclipse was yet to come.

With the westering sun full in their faces now, the French came storming on, the silly, gallant Alençon ever in the lead. But at this late hour, King Philippe tried to give some semblance of order to his host. He bade his brother wait, and let the Genoese crossbow-men go in first to clear the way for the cavalry, as was the custom. Now the Genoese were among the stoutest fighters of Europe ; and also, almost alone in that great host, they were trained soldiers, and knew the details of their craft. They knew that it was a madness, and an injustice, to send exhausted men—and had they not, with incredible endurance, kept pace with the cavalry for the whole of that long, hot day's march ?—against a fresh and rested enemy. Moreover, their bow-strings were damp from the recent rainstorm. Knowing what may justly be asked of the strength and courage of fighting men, and what may not, they asked for time to rest, and for the ordering of their weapons. But Philippe in his impatience, and with the natural distrust and dislike of the chevalier for the mercenary, would not heed, and bade them go forward.

They went forward, for they were trained soldiers and

accustomed to obey ; but their hearts were not in the business and they went unwillingly, for they knew that they could not give of their best. Solidly, steadily they moved on, under the leadership of their captains, Dorio and Grimaldi—but there was no enthusiasm for the fight. Three times they advanced, and three times they halted, well-disciplined, to allow the closing up of their ranks. At the third halt, they raised their weapons, and loosed a volley. But their strings were damp, and the bolts fell harmless, almost at their feet.

Then at an order, the English archers rose to their feet. They took three short, calm steps forward, took steady aim, and let loose their terrible goose-feathered shafts. Again and again came the frightful rain of arrows, darkening the sky almost as the thunderstorm had done ; and under the rain of death the Genoese, unable to reply, lost what little heart they had ever had for the stupid business, and began to draw back. Whereupon Alençon, who had already been held back to make room for the foreign mercenaries, charged them from the rear, crying, " Kill ! Kill the cowardly dogs ! "

With flashing swords and a right good will the French nobles slashed at the Genoese, who replied hardily enough with their daggers ; and soon a battle within a battle was raging in the narrow neck of land before the English lines.

Seeing this, King Philippe sent forward Jacques de Bourbon, less to succour his foreign infantry for which he had little more respect than had his brother, than to clear the battlefield, blocked by the struggling French and Genoese. Bourbon forced a way through, and disengaged the Genoese ; but in the doing, he put himself in advance of Alençon, which was more than that hot-headed young prince could stomach. He ordered the charge ; but here, strangely enough, some of his captains would have restrained him, saying that it were wiser to wait until the King himself could come up. Whereupon Alençon flung

himself at his standard-bearer, Jacques d'Estracelles, who had taken off his helmet for a mouthful of fresh air, and ordered him to carry forward his banner. D'Estracelles objected, for he was battle-wise, and saw the folly of charging the English on their high point of vantage without first at least clearing away the barrier of archers. Whereupon Alençon flamed at him, bidding him re-helm and do as he was bid. "Since such is your wish," grunted the standard-bearer, "ah, well, I obey. I will put on my bascinet, but I will never take it off again." Then, with his banner before him, Alençon charged.

Prince Edward, on foot on the little ridge of ground behind the archers, saw that charge; and it was such a thing as he had never seen before. Like a tempest-driven sea the young French nobles surged up the slope towards the cliff of the English resistance, crested with the foam of their flying plumes, followed by the sweep of their sumptuous garments, which spread out on the wind of their speed like long surges of the sea. Roaring like the ocean in the pride of their fierce young manhood they came, confident in their power to crush, to overwhelm.

Never had Prince Edward seen so proudly beautiful a spectacle as that insane charge, hurling itself blindly on a certain death, never so gallant a folly as that hopeless dash against the deadly English archers. Hopeless? Yes . . . but for all that it nearly accomplished the impossible, quite accomplished the incredible. For the wild fury of that charge had been such that it broke the unbreakable, smashed the solid formation of the English infantry. Riding like men possessed, the French knights burst through the archers, brushing them aside and trampling them underfoot as though they had been no more than corn-stalks. And now they were through, and storming up the slope on which the Prince himself, with his captains and his men-at-arms, waited on foot to receive them.

Prince Edward had faced many a sturdy lance in joust

and tournament—but never had he faced such a thing as this. Thundering like a tidal wave, the French charge came up the slope, and roaring it towered over the dismounted English. Like an angry sea it came, and like a frail barque, over-weak despite the royal blazon on its sails, Prince Edward went down before it.

Prince Edward was down, flat upon his back ; and for a moment his heart must have failed him as, gazing upwards, he saw the bellies of huge war-horses looming over him, saw the flash of their steel-shod hooves before his eyes. Only for a moment he saw the terror of that rushing weight of horse-flesh and steel that towered above him ; for his Norman standard-bearer, Richard de Beaumont, was not at his side for nothing. Without the loss of a second, he freed his hands by letting fall from them the great banner of Wales, so that its heavy silken folds covered and hid the young Prince from head to feet. Then, standing astride the prostrate body of his fallen master, he cried, “ Edward a Saint George au fils du roy ! ” and whirling up his great sword with both hands, he let fly at those who would have robbed him of his charge.

Like a storm-driven sea the French had come, but like a cliff the English had received them ; and now they were ebbing back down the slope up which they had charged. With the French attack beaten off, Prince Edward was safe enough between the twin towers that were the legs of Richard de Beaumont—nevertheless, those in whose safe-keeping the heir to the throne of England had been placed, were dismayed. The Earl of Warwick sent to King Edward for aid. His messenger found the King, in his brave velvet doublet, perched high up in a tower,¹ from whence he had the whole of the battle beneath his eyes. Listening to the anxious words of Warwick’s envoys, he asked quietly : “ Is my son wounded, or taken ? ” “ No, Sire,”

¹ This tower, originally built by the Counts of Ponthieu to serve as a belvedere, was later turned into a mill, traces of which still remain.

they replied. Then, "Go," said the King, "and say on my behalf to those who sent you, that they make no further request of me, no matter what may come to pass, so long as my son be still alive; and say to my son that I bid him die, or win his spurs." And thus did Prince Edward, on his two feet again now and firmly planted beside his banner, learn the stern lesson of self-dependence.

Alençon had not only failed in his mad attempt, but he had left the battlefield so littered with dead and dying men and horses that the further charges of the French failed even to reach the line of archers. Moreover their horses, wiser than their riders, refused to face the storm of arrows, and the French, having themselves disposed of their bowmen, had nothing to pit against the English archers. Nor was it the arrows alone that terrified the horses. The unaccustomed roar of Edward's three pieces of artillery sent them mad with fear, and riderless animals, striving to escape the horror, dashed frantically about, spreading confusion and disorder amid their fellows. Yet, wave upon wave, the cavalry charges came on; and each one, in ebbing, left a still more unsurmountable barrier of bloody debris behind it. Each successive charge was first dislocated by the wild galloping of riderless horses, then decimated by the steady rain of arrows, and finally, what was left of it, dashed to pieces against that dreadful barrier of its own dead.

And now Philippe the King himself came upon the field. He had thought to find a victory awaiting him, but his first sight was that of his *milice*, his foot-soldiers, which he had swept up with him from every village and town in his long pursuit of the English, quitting the field in wild disorder. Stricken with terror at the sight of the successive failures of their seigneurs, they were flying the battle before they had so much as come to grips with the enemy—for what chance had they, humble, despised foot-soldiers, of accomplishing that which their steel-clad, invincible knights found impossible? King Philippe might have paused to

gather these together—might have sent them to take the English in the rear—might have waited for the troops of the King of Bohemia, which were coming on behind—but he did none of these things. He drew his sword and cried to the fugitives, "Come, my children! Let us go forward in the name of God and Saint Denis!" and setting spurs to his horse, he dashed on as madly as his brother had done before him. The *milice*, fired by the presence of their king, turned and, with cries of "A mort! A mort!" came pelting after him, with as much order and discipline as a pack of hounds racing after their keeper at feeding-time.

Sunset had come when the king launched his own battle against the English centre. King Philippe, if he were a poor captain, had the great personal courage of his race—and time after time he haled himself against the unyielding defence of his enemies. Time after time he was flung back, but ever he came on again. His horse was slain under him, and he took another. He was soaked with the blood of a wound in the throat, another in the thigh—but he could not believe that he was beaten.

And now, under the old blind King of Bohemia, the rearguard came up. Anxiously he asked of his attendants, Henri de Rosemberg and Jean de Leucestemberg, as the battle came in view, how the fight went. They shook their heads sadly, saying that things looked ill for the King of France. "Then," said the proud old man quietly, "do you lead me forward so that at least I may deal a good blow before I die." Obediently the young men tied their bridle-reins to those of the old king, in order that they might not be separated in the press, and led him forward to the royal death that he had chosen.

Night had fallen now, but still the battle throbbed feverishly, spasmodically, like the beating of an overstrained heart, ever more slowly, ever more feebly. But still King Philippe, acting with the dull, unthinking determination of one who walks in his sleep, toiled on. Once

the failing heart of the battle beat high again, when a French seigneur, more astute than his fellows, bethought him of the elementary idea of taking the English on the flank over towards Wadicourt-way. But the thought, excellent though it was, came many hours too late; for by now men and horses were exhausted, and could not make the effort necessary for the clearing of the barricade of carts that protected the English flank. The little spark of hope died out in the night of hopeless defeat.

And now Jean de Hainault came to King Philippe and laid his hand on his bridle-rein, saying, "Sire, do you come now; never let yourself be taken so easily. And if you have lost this day, why, you will win another." Unhearing, unseeing, unknowing, stunned with the magnitude of his loss, King Philippe let himself be led from that field of disaster that reeked with the noblest blood of France, spilled in useless, stupid sacrifice to the half-witted god of unreasoning courage. He who had come to the field of Crécy in all the pride of his great host of 60,000 men, left it with a following of but five—Jean de Hainault, Charles de Montmorenci, the Seigneurs de Beaujeu, d'Aubigny, and de Montfort.

It was midnight.

In the dark of the night the English kept their ranks, obeying the orders of their leaders, who knew well the danger of leaving their high, narrow place of safety, to spread out over the plain below in pursuit of even a beaten foe. But there were those who obeyed no orders, heeded no will but their own, and that was to go a-gleaning among the bloody harvest that had been reaped in the field before them. These were the half-savage Welsh knife-men, who slipped, silent and stealthy as jackals, from their place among the rearguard, and went soft-footed among their helpless prey. Then was the night made hideous with smothered cries that came bubbling from slit throats, with

the shrill screams of dying men mutilated for the sake of their jewelled finger-rings.

Thus ended that battle "so horrible, that never was man so bold that would not be dismayed thereat."¹

In the morning, King Edward took his son and went with him down among the heaps of the slain. There before them lay the mangled corpses of 24 banncrets, 1200 knights, 1500 squires, and over 4000 men of the commonality. There lay the Counts of Flanders, of Blois, of Salm, of Harcourt, of Auxerre, of Saint Pol, of Sancerre, and the king's young brother, Alençon. There was the Duke of Lorraine and Jacques, son of the Dauphin of the Viennois. There lay seven Lords of Germany, and there the old King of Bohemia and his esquires, their horses still tied together by the bridle-rein.

Passing thus between the ramparts of the dead, King Edward turned to his young son, saying, "And what think you of a battle? Do you find it a pleasant sport?" But the Prince "was silent and shamefaced"² and would not answer. It was not, perhaps, the sight of the 4000 bodies of common men that abashed him, but the knowledge that the ground upon which he trod was soaked and soaked again with noble, ay, and royal blood, that had been spilled by hands unworthy of the task. He was troubled at the thought that nearly 3000 men of gentle birth lay upon that field, while his father held prisoner scarce a handful—and that was not according to the code of chivalry of his day, which allotted death to the commoner, but honourable prison and ransom to the noble.

It may be that King Edward, too, was not overly pleased with some of the sights that met his eyes. But he had greater experience in warfare than had his son, and knew that such accidents must of necessity take place at times. He could count his chivalry unblemished, since it was not by his orders that the Welsh knife-men had crept

¹ Chandos Herald.

² Bourgeois de Valenciennes.

out and gone about their ghastly business in the dark of night. No, it was through no fault of his—and what was done could not be undone, so no good end was to be served by croaking about it. But if he could not undo, he could at least extenuate. He took mourning for the dead, and ordered that the bodies of the nobles be given respectful and decent burial, and that they be not further despoiled. Yet he himself laid his hand on the body of the King of Bohemia—but it was a reverent and respectful hand, and that could bring no shame nor dishonour to the old blind warrior. It was a hand that did no more than loosen the golden cord that bound the crest of white feathers to the dead king's helmet, and give it to his son, as a token of his first battle, and in memory of the noblest and bravest blood that had been spilled there, so that he might never forget how a knight should bear himself, nor how a king should die.

For three days the King's clerks numbered the illustrious dead in the Valley of Bulecamp, which from that time on bore the name of Val des Clercs, in memory of that happening. And while the heralds and clerks noted the blazons and listed the names, the folk of Crécy and Wadicourt were bidden dig great trenches for the burial of the commoners. These last the King permitted his men to strip before interring them ; but such was the mass of arms thus collected, that Edward's little army would have been crushed beneath the weight of them, and he ordered that they be heaped upon a monstrous bonfire, so that the heat of the fire might spoil them, and make them unfit for further use.

But it was not only the King's clerks who went about the ghastly field. There was another who searched more anxiously than they, and that was Godefroi d'Harcourt. He had seen the banner of his brother and the head of his house, Louis, Count d'Harcourt, in the French van, and in his heart he was afraid, for he knew that the Harcourts "never deign to fly a battle."¹ So that when at last he

¹ Froissart

found that for which he sought, he was not amazed, but a great grief and a great shame tore at his heart, and at last he realised the horror of the thing he had done. For the sake of vengeance he had delivered up his countrymen to the invader, and now for that same vengeance he had slain his own brother. With the weight of that anguish upon him, he got to horse and rode straight to Amiens, where King Philippe was : and there, tying his silken scarf about his neck in guise of a rope, he threw himself at the King's feet and prayed for forgiveness. And Philippe, who at that moment would probably have forgiven the Devil himself did he but offer him a sturdy sword-arm, raised him up and received him back into his favour.

King Edward had won at Crécy "a noble, tryumphant vycторыe, by the manhood of hys archers"; but these same archers "did ncither crak nor boast thereof."¹ Instead, for three days they buried the dead as they had been bidden, gathered such loot as their brawny backs could bear—and that was not a little—and set off sturdily to complete their interrupted march to the coast, and home.

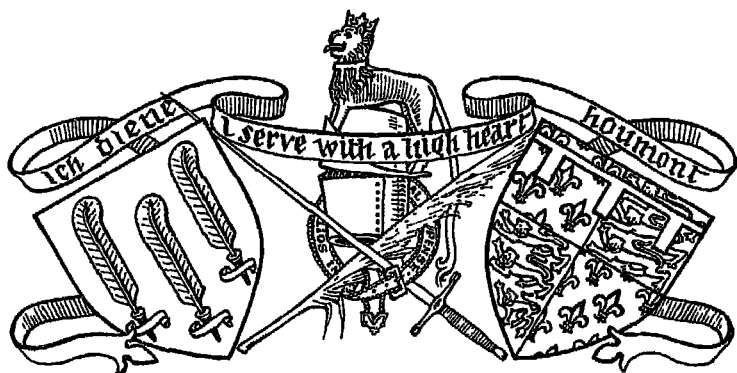
Home? But King Edward who, these many days past, had had no other thought in his mind than to reach that haven of refuge as rapidly as might be, had now another idea in his victory-flushed mind. His great raid had had no other object than wanton destruction, and the gathering of as much loot as he could find; but now it came to him that, freed as he was from the menace of King Philippe and his army, he could win a lasting benefit from his rash exploit, and one that would for ever justify it in the eyes of his people. He would march to the coast, ay—but he would not set sail from it, not at least until he had assured himself a permanent foothold upon it. If he could not as yet have the whole of France, he would have an open door to it—if he could not have Paris, he would have Calais. Calais should be the prize for Crécy.

¹ Grafton

PART TWO

" Oure horses, that were faire and fat,
Are eaten up ilk one bidene ;
Have we neither coney nor cat,
That they are not eaten, and houndes kene,
All are eaten up full clene :
Is neither living biche nor whelp,
That is well in our semblance sene ;
And thei are fled that should us help."

LAURENCE MINOT.
(" Lament of Burghers of Calais.")



PART TWO

ON Wednesday, 30th August, King Edward sat down with his army about the strong place of Calais. But if he hoped to have such another facile victory as he had had over the burghers of Caen, he was doomed to disappointment; for the good folk of Calais were of a different temper, as was indeed the town itself, with its double row of fortifications. Moreover, even as King Edward's heralds presented themselves before one gate to demand the surrender of the place, through another slipped three great captains—Jean de Vienne, Arnoul d'Audrehem, and Jean de Surie—who had managed to approach the threatened place behind the shelter of intervening sand-dunes, and had entered the town unseen and unmolested. And it was Jean de Vienne, as governor of the place, who answered King Edward's summons with a determined "No."

The English King, looking with experienced eyes at the great fortifications that reared their double ramparts before him, saw that there could be no question of an assault. Most of his great siege engines had been abandoned at the crossing of the Seine, and in any case the soil about the walls was too marshy with sea water to bear their great weight, nor would it permit of successful mining. And as for his famous cannon—even if he could bring them up

within striking distance—Jean de Vienne had caused great mattresses and sacks stuffed with chaff and hay to be hung from the walls, and these would be sufficient to deaden the effects of the leisurely, trundling balls that they were capable of ejecting. No, this must be a siege in form, where the slow weapon of hunger must be depended upon to take the place of more dashing methods.

So King Edward set to work to install his camp. And it was no haphazard, flimsy affair of tent and rough shelters that he made, but a proper town with its streets, shops, and market-places; and so strongly did he fortify it, that it seemed as though "he himself were afraid of of being besieged."¹ To the Gravelines side of his camp, he had caused a number of his ships to be drawn up upon the beach, manning them with archers, and setting his famous cannon on the decks. On the other side, the little river Hems, with its marshy banks, made a natural wall of defence; and where the stream flung itself into the sea, on a tongue of firm ground, he built a strong wooden castle, in which he placed 40 men-at-arms and 200 archers, whose duty it was to watch and guard the port and harbour of Calais. When all these things were done, he baptized his town by the name of Villeneuve la Hardie, and sat down quietly to wait while his great ally, Famine, should gather his irresistible forces and come to his aid.

Thus, in the autumn of that year, Prince Edward, the Black Prince—for since, in his black armour, he had so gallantly proved himself at Crécy, the French had dubbed him "Le Prince Noir"—began on the last stage of his course of instruction in military matters. And had King Edward himself planned out that course beforehand, it could not have been fuller, more complete; for had it not comprised an invasion, a masterly retreat, a great pitched battle against overwhelming odds, and all in the space of two months? And now, to terminate, came the siege in

¹ Abbé de Choisy.

form of a strong fortified place. Surely no young prince had ever prepared his career as a soldier with more striking examples of the practice of the theory of warfare than did Prince Edward in that year of grace 1346, and of his life the sixteenth.

Jean de Vienne, from his place on the walls of Calais, watched the doings of King Edward with no little interest and with complete understanding. This, he saw, was to be a duel of endurance rather than of strength, and he acted accordingly. He gave orders that everything that could be of use to the beleaguered town be brought into it while there was still time—and that everything useless be put out of it without delay. Those “useless” things in the town of Calais were the aged and the infirm, all, in fact, who could not pay for the bread they ate with the toil of their hands. These Vienne gathered together and thrust outside the walls, slamming the gates to behind them—for such was the somewhat brutal, but highly logical, custom of the day. Also, according to custom, King Edward let the refugees pass through his lines—and perhaps because he was still warm with the victorious fire of Crécy, he gave “two pence sterling to everie person”¹ to help him or her along the road to safety to the nearest French town.

While King Edward sat before Calais and Jean de Vienne sat within it, each determined to be a better sitter than his adversary, King Philippe in Amiens looked about him for an army, and saw that he had no armed men, save only the renegade, Godefroi d’Harcourt. And Harcourt, gallant fighter though he was, could scarcely put King Edward out of France single-handed, though single-handed he had brought him in. So the French king could see nothing for it but to send for his son, Jean, Duke of Normandy,

¹ Holinshed.

who was busy with his fighting in the south. Jean came at his father's summons, but he came reluctant, for he had been besieging Lord Norwich in Aiguillon these six months past, and had sworn to have the place. Moreover, Norwich had, in the previous March, played him a scurvy trick, and he was anxious to have his own back.

At that time he had been besieging Norwich in Angoulême, and had pressed him so hard that he was confident of having the place and the garrison in his hands before many days were out. Seeing Norwich appear on the walls one fine morning, he had hastened forward to speak with him, thinking that the Englishman was about to offer surrender. "Not so," said Norwich, "but as to-morrow is the Feast of the Virgin, for whom I know that you, Monseigneur, as well as myself, have a great reverence, I ask for a cessation of arms for that day." Somewhat taken aback, the Duke of Normandy nevertheless consented. But what was his amazement on the next morning, to see Norwich, with his whole garrison and his baggage train, issue out of the town. Thinking that, in spite of the day's truce, the English were making a sortie, the French ran to their arms; but Norwich sent a messenger to the Duke, reminding him of his promise of the day before. And Jean of Normandy, who was a man of his word, could do nothing else but stand helplessly by while Norwich and his men made their leisurely way to Aiguillon, thus exchanging a battered and half-demolished fortress for a new and much more formidable one. The Duke of Normandy had kept his word, but he was piqued nevertheless; and having trailed after the English to Aiguillon, he sat about it stubbornly, determined to have it and the wily Norwich. Moreover, his best friend, Philippe, Count of Artois, son of the Duke of Burgundy, having been killed, he had sworn to have vengeance before he left the place. So that his father's summons gave him but slight pleasure. Nevertheless, being a dutiful son, he packed his baggage, aban-

doned Aiguillon and his vengeance, and marched northwards to Paris.

While the Duke of Normandy brought men to his father, King Philippe busied himself with the financial side of affairs; and in that undertaking he proved himself to be more enterprising and more subtle than he had been in the business of war. He brought suit against Pierre des Essaerts, guardian of the royal treasury, and managed to win 50,000 florins from him. He caused all the Italian merchants, so numerous in France, to be arrested and expelled from the kingdom—after confiscation of their considerable goods, naturally. He announced that all debtors should be declared freed from the interest on their debts, provided they paid the principal to him; which, one can imagine, they did willingly enough, though what became of the unhappy creditors is not stated. So, by using every expedient he could imagine for the turning of an honest penny, King Philippe was once more in possession of a war-chest by the time his son joined him in Paris.

Now, it was well enough to bring troops north for the relief of Calais, but there were towns in the south in a perilous position too; and no sooner had the Duke of Normandy reluctantly abandoned Guienne than the Earl of Derby, who had so far held himself modestly on the defensive in the province, now began to make havoc with a right goodwill. He took Taillebourg and Saint Jean d'Angely, Lusignan and Sauveterre, and Poitiers he stormed, with great slaughter of men, women, and children. So great was his martial energy that "there was none that durst go about to disquiet him, all the countrie trembled so at his presence."¹ Thus, while the Duke of Normandy's departure brought comfort to the people of the north, it brought considerable discomfort to the unhappy folk of the south.

King Philippe was not alone in receiving reinforcements, for men flocked to King Edward at Calais, too. His kinsman, the Earl of Kent, came, and the Earls of Pembroke and Kildare. And late in September there came Sir Walter de Mauny, countryman of Queen Philippa, and who had been her esquire on her wedding journey in 1327. Ever since, he had remained in the service of England, and had proven himself most perfect knight, hardy soldier, and gallant gentleman. Now he came up from the south, where he had been fighting with Derby, and, as was his custom, found adventures in plenty on the road.

Given a safe-conduct by the Duke of Normandy in person, he was hurrying to join King Edward when, in spite of the royal guarantee he carried, he was attacked near Saint Jean d'Angely, and only escaped by the skin of his teeth, leaving most of his men between the hands of the enemy. Having pushed as far as Orleans, he was again assailed, and this time arrested and taken to Paris. There King Philippe, whose thoughts were at the moment all of financial matters, prepared to swell still further his funds by the ransoming of so rich a prize. But he had reckoned without his son, who was a man of his word, and not one to see his signature dishonoured without protest. Father and son came to words, well-nigh to blows; but in the end the Duke had his way, and forced his reluctant parent to relinquish his ill-gotten spoils; forced him too, perhaps, to see the error of his ways, for the King made peace-offering to Mauny of one thousand florins worth of jewels, and sent him on his way unransomed and unharmed, save only in his temper. These jewels Mauny displayed to King Edward, with perhaps some measure of pride; but King Edward also had his principles, for he frowned at the sight, saying, "Messire Walter, return his presents to King Philippe; we have enough, thanks be to God, for ourselves and for you too, and we are right willing to recompense you according to the services you have ren-

dered us." Whether Mauny was the gainer or the loser over the transaction, history does not tell us.

But in November there came to Calais a greater than the three Earls, and one with an even braver adventure to tell of than had Mauny; and that was Queen Philippa herself, and the news of the capture of David Bruce of Scotland at Neville's Cross. With a great train of gentlemen she came, and a flutter of noble dames; and these latter caused great satisfaction to the besieging army, since the one deficiency in their gallant town of Villeneuve la Hardie was thus made good. But to Prince Edward they brought a cruel disappointment, since the only royal lady in that bevy of loveliness, besides his mother, was his somewhat self-satisfied eldest sister, Isabella.

Queen Philippa, doubtless, expended treasures of praise and admiration on her eldest son, but the admiration of one's mother is to be expected, and while acceptable enough in its way, does not fill every requirement. It has not the same thrilling quality that the admiration of, say, one's cousin Joan would have had. But Joan, alas! had remained behind in England, with the other royal children. While as for the Princess Isabella, she was too intent on her own young person, too proudly conscious of her position as her father's favourite, to pay much heed to the young males of her family, veterans of Crécy though they might be.

Joan of Kent, had Prince Edward but known it, had remained in England for reasons of a matrimonial nature; while his sister Isabella had been brought to France for exactly the same reasons. King Edward, who had a weakness of the heart for his eldest daughter, had looked about for a suitable husband for her, and his choice had fallen upon Louis de Male. Louis de Male would make an excellent husband for Isabella, both from the sentimental and the political points of view, for he was young and comely, and since his father's death on the field of Crécy, he was Count of Flanders. But Louis de Male

was at the court of King Philippe, where it was difficult even for King Edward to lay hands upon him. So the King forthwith wrote to the more notable burghers of the larger Flemish towns, pointing out to them the advantages of the match. The burghers, with their eyes ever turned towards the wool-sacks of England, agreed heartily, and summoned their young count home.

Louis came, but when he heard the reason for the summons, he was outraged. Never, he cried, would he marry the daughter of the man who had killed his father, did the hall of the Kingdom of England go with her. If the burghers of Flanders were taken aback at his vehemence, they took no time to argue the matter with him, for they had always known perfectly well how to deal with their Counts when they displeased them. On this occasion, they quite simply clapped the young man into prison, and left him there to cool his heels and his temper.

By March the Count of Flanders was prepared to obey his subjects, and was let out, to be taken incontinent to Bergues, there to plight his unwilling troth to the English Princess in the Abbey of Saint Vinoc. They could scarce have made a romantic couple, those two young people kneeling on the altar steps—Isabella, cold, hard, proud, thinking of the coronet of Flanders, and not at all of her young betrothed—Louis, sullen, unwilling, resentful, thinking only of his dead father, and not at all of the maid beside him. And now the thing was done, and the wedding fixed for the fortnight after Easter. Count Louis was allowed to go home, since he had been obedient.

He had been obedient so far, but he had not yet said his last word. A week before the wedding, he went a-hawking; and his guard, still somewhat suspicious, went with him. Presently the young man raised a fine heron, and with a shout of excitement rode forward, while his escort, courteously but misguidedly, held back, to let him take it alone. But of a sudden, Count Louis's interest in

the heion seemed to flag. With a quick glance across his shoulder, he bent low over his horse's neck, and at the same time drove home the spurs. Now, Count Louis had been brought up at the court of France, and he rode like a French prince, and not like a Flemish burgher. So he went over the border of Artois light as a southing swallow, and the Flemings had lost their Count, the Princess Isabella her husband, and King Edward his ally, before ever the stout burghers had time to close their astonished mouths.

And now indeed the Flemings were dismayed in all conscience, for they feared to see King Edward deprive them of his favour, or rather, of his English wool. So, to placate him, they sent him 10,000 men to help along the siege; and it may well be that Edward found the bargain to be a good one, for it would certainly be easier to find a husband for Isabella than an army to reduce stubborn Calais.

So far, Calais had been provisioned, for the English were too few to block the place completely, and Norman and Picard captains continually ran the gauntlet successfully with their ships laden with necessities for the beleaguered place. In April 1347, a convoy of thirty ships had revictualled the town; but now, with the coming of the Flemings, the siege was more rigorous. Moreover, at about this time, Derby, Earl of Lancaster since the recent death of his father, came from his victorious campaign in the south, bringing with him the Earls of Gloucester and Hereford, 800 men-at-arms, and 2000 archers. The encirclement of Calais was complete now, and Edward had placed wooden stockades in the shallows where the Picard captains had been wont to pass, while his great fleet of 737 vessels patrolled the seas.

The town was beginning to feel the pinch of hunger, and once more Jean de Vienne, the governor, took drastic measures. Once more he put the useless mouths outside

the gates of Calais, 1700 of them. But this time King Edward's temper had changed ; far from being elated with a recent victory, he was coldly angry at the long resistance of the stubborn place. So, far from giving money to the unhappy crowd of fugitives, he refused even to let them cross his lines, but drove them back into the moat of the town. In that moat the starving horde of the aged, the sick, and the feeble, huddled, blocked on one side by the pitiless walls of Calais, and on the other by the equally pitiless lines of the English. There they ate grass, chewed their shoes, swallowed the very earth itself to ease the pangs of their aching hunger, and there they died of famine beneath the scarcely less hungry eyes of their husbands, fathers, and brothers. But Jean de Vienne was inflexible ; he had been given for task the saving of Calais, and save it he would if it were humanly, or inhumanly, possible to do so ; while King Edward was relentless, for he had sworn to have Calais, and if he could not slay the fighting men of the place with weapons of steel, he would weaken them with the deadlier weapon of pity. So in that valley of unspeakable misery that was the moat of Calais, the shadows of women gave birth to the skeletons of children ; and so that their poor little souls might at least be assured heaven after they were freed from the hell into which they had been born, those of the town let down baskets every night and raised them up to the top of the wall, where a priest baptized them. Then they were lowered again to the empty breasts of their mothers. Yet, for all that circle of horror that lay between the circle of the walls of the town and the circle of the English camp, Jean de Vienne would not open his gates and let them in, King Edward would not open his lines and let them out.

By June, those of Calais had eaten " hors, houndes, cattes, and mys,"¹ and still no help came from King Philippe. On the 25th of that month, forty-four French

¹ *The Br.*

ships laden with food tried to run the blockade ; but the Earls of Pembroke and Northampton, cruising off Boulogne, saw them and gave chase. Only fourteen of them were taken, the rest winning free ; but that was of little consolation to the starving folk of Calais on their walls, who thus saw their vision of food vanish before their eyes, as the vision of water vanishes in a desert mirage.

Seeing this last hope disappear, Jean de Vienne knew that the end had come ; but, stubborn fighter that he was, he would make one more effort before crying " Enough." King Philippe had bidden him hold Calais while he gathered his forces, and hold Calais he had, through ten long months. Ten months—surely even King Philippe would have made some definite move in all that time. And indeed, he had at last " taken leave of Monseigneur Saint Denis " and set out on the road towards his harassed town, and had pushed as far as Amiens, taking with him his sons, the Dukes of Normandy and Orleans. At Amiens there came to join him the Duke of Bourbon, the Dukes of Burgundy, of Athens, and the Counts of Foix, Valentinois, Savoy, Ponthieu, and Jean de Hainault. Remembering the Genoese crossbow-men of Crécy, he took no commoners with him this time, and it was with a host of nobles and men of gentle birth, 20,000 in all, that at long last he set out for the relief of Calais.

At Crécy, where caution would have been the salvation of his great army, he had rushed to the attack with the unthinking speed of a swooping bird of prey ; but now, when speed alone could save the great seaport of Calais, he came in the leisurely fashion of a man on a pleasure trip, and there was no matter too trifling to cause him to turn aside from his goal. Hearing that the Flemings had come raiding into the Artois, he deviated the course of his march by way of Arras, Hesdin, and Terouanne, in order to punish them. Then he detached the Duke of Normandy, and bade him assault Cassel. This he was nothing loath

to do, for he was a young man of a vigorous turn of mind and fond of violent action. From morning to midday on the 8th of June he delivered a fierce attack, taking the outworks of the place and driving the garrison back into the town. But the arrival of reinforcements forced the Duke to draw off, so that nothing was gained by the day's work, and much time and many men lost. The prudent advice to detach another force and approach the English by way of Gravelines, their most vulnerable point, the King brushed aside, preferring instead to continue his chastisement of the Flemings by the taking of Lieu Saint-Vaast, and a few other places of little importance.

But even the march of a King Philippe must come to an end at last, and on the 27th of July the folk of Calais saw a sight that rejoiced their hungry hearts and still hungrier bellies. There, on the heights of Sangatte, they saw the royal banners of France come surging up ; saw, shining like a sea about them, the multicoloured flash and sparkle of 20,000 men under arms. A great shout went up from all those starving throats, for now indeed they were saved, since their King had come to them, and their long months of suffering were not to be in vain.

But King Philippe looked on the situation with a less hopeful eye. There were three ways by which he might approach the town. The easiest and most obvious was over the dunes by the shore ; but on that shore were drawn up Edward's ships, with their redoubtable cannon and their still more redoubtable archers. Moreover, he would have to take his army over the Hems by the Nieulay bridge, which latter was strongly guarded by the Earl of Lancaster. That road was barred ; while to the east, on the Gravelines side, the Flemings had taken advantage of the slowness of his approach to make a sturdy barrier. The third alternative was to attack midway between these two points, but this last road was the most hazardous of all the three, since he would have to lead his army over marshy ground,

incapable of bearing the weight of armour-clad men and horses.

Even as he examined this unpromising state of affairs, there came to him two legates of Pope Clement VI., anxious once more to try to bring his two warring children to terms. At their instigation, a conference was held midway between the two camps, Lancaster and Northampton acting for the English, Bourbon and Athens for the French. But nothing came of their meeting, for King Philippe demanded above all else the safety of his people and town of Calais, and to that King Edward would not consent. In exchange for Calais, Philippe offered Guyenne and Ponthieu ; whereat Edward smiled, for those provinces were already in his pocket, and he could see no benefit in paying the great price of Calais for that which he had already acquired for nothing.

Seeing that he could gain nothing by bargaining, King Philippe at last decided upon action. He sent 1500 men to attack Edward's wooden castle at low tide. This, after a fierce struggle, the French succeeded in taking, putting to the sword the whole of the garrison and razing it to the ground. All of which was well enough—but when King Philippe sent forward his marshals, the seigneurs of Beaujeu and of Saint-Venant, to see if the road was now open to his armies, they came back, saying that they could see no way in which the King could bring his men, with any reasonable degree of safety, within striking distance of the English. Hearing which, Philippe felt that he had done enough for one day, and took himself to his bed.

On the following morning he sent four knights of his suite with a challenge to Edward to come outside his fortifications and fight. The Earl of Lancaster let the messengers pass over Nieulay bridge, and when they had come into the presence of the English king, one of them, Eustache de Ribamont, came forward, bent the knee, and spoke.

"Sire," he said, "the King of France sends us to you, and would have you know that he is drawn up on the heights of Sangatte to give you battle. But he can find no way by which he can come at you, despite his great desire to relieve his town of Calais. So does he ask that you name a time and place for battle, and has sent us to you to beg that you will do so."

But the wily Angevin was uppermost in King Edward now, and not on the chances of a pitched battle would he risk that which he already held within his hand.

"Seigneurs," he replied, "I have heard the message you bring me from my adversary, who wrongly withholds from me my true heritage, which I cannot forget. So do you say to him that I am here, and have been here nigh on a year, which he well knows, so that he might have come long ago, had he been so minded. But he has left me here so long a time that already I have spent much in money and in goods, and have laboured to such good purpose that shortly I shall be the master of both the town and the château of Calais. So that I will in no wise consent to obey his good pleasure, nor give up that which I have already conquered. Do you then tell him on my behalf, that if he cannot find a road to come at me on one side, that he look for it on another." And with that answer must King Philippe's messengers content themselves, for he would give them no other.

This crossing of verbal swords was well enough in its way for the amusement of kings, but for the good folk of Calais it left something to be desired, and "they would have wished to be delivered earlier, since they had been kept too long a-fasting."¹ Whereupon Jean de Vienne, thinking that his king must be in ignorance of the actual depths of their misery, took pen in hand, and, in a letter vibrant with both courage and despair, he set out his case with the simple dignity of a soldier.

¹ Froissart.

"Very beloved and very dread lord," he wrote, "I recommend myself to you as best I can, as one most anxious to know how you fare. And if it pleases you to know how matters go with our town of Calais, be assured that when these letters were written, we were all hale and well, and full of goodwill for your service, and to do everything for your honour and profit. But, very dear and very dread lord, the town has great need of grain, wine, and meat. For know that there is nothing that has not been eaten, the dogs and the cats and the horses, so that we can no longer find the wherewithal to feed ourselves in all the town, unless we eat human flesh. For previously you wrote to me that I was to hold the town as long as there was food to eat. And now we are come to the point where we have nothing at all left to eat. . . ."

This letter the captain of Calais confided to a Genoese sea-captain, who, with the hardihood of his race, swore to do all in his power to deliver it into the hands of the French king.

With a French ship to guide him, the worthy Genoese set sail, and so able a sailor was he that he managed to clear the harbour unchecked. But a short way down the coast the two little ships were seen, and the English put after them in hot pursuit. The French vessel turned back; but the Genoese shipmaster, with his precious letter, pushed bravely on, and might well have carried out his mission successfully had his French guide seen fit to stay with him, or had he himself had a better knowledge of the coast. As it was, he struck a hidden shoal, and his English pursuers came surging up. Even then, he made a last desperate effort to accomplish that which he had undertaken, and tying the letter to the handle of an axe, he hurled it into the sea, sending it as far shorewards as he could.

By so doing, he had hoped that the missive might be washed ashore, picked up, and delivered to King Philippe.

And so indeed it happened, but it was English hands that found it, it was to King Edward that it was taken, and the despairing cry of Jean de Vienne, far from bringing him the help of his friends, but served to make his enemies the more determined. For King Edward knew now for a certainty that it was no more than a matter of days with Calais.

On the next morning, the 2nd of August, King Philippe looked out from the heights of Sangatte towards his town of Calais—looked once, and then turned his eyes away. He had taken King Edward's wooden fort, so that his knightly reputation was safe; he had defied King Edward to his face, so that his kingly honour was unstained. He turned his back upon Calais, and gave orders to his captains.

Those within Calais also looked abroad, out over the heights of Sangatte, for an unusual bustle in the French camp gave them the hope, nay, the certainty, that King Philippe was about to attack in force, to relieve them, or die in the attempt. With beating hearts they watched the captains bustling hither and thither, watched the great, steel-clad battle horses led forward. With beating hearts they watched; but of a sudden their hearts turned cold and heavy within them. For from the French camp there went up a great column of smoke, black and heavy as despair. And when that sombre, heavy curtain was at length raised, nothing was left upon the heights of Sangatte but the smouldering ruins of the French camp. Not a banner was left, not a knight, not a baron, not a seigneur—not the King. Blank-eyed, scarcely understanding, the hungry folk of Calais gazed at the empty space, as a thirsty man gazes at the burning sand at his feet where, a minute before, was the mirage of running water.

No cry went up from the doomed people, their agony of heart and of mind was too great for weeping and wailing. Their king, their natural protector, had turned his back upon them and left them to their bitter fate; 20,000 fighting

men of their own country had abandoned them to the enemy. Dumbly they looked once more toward that spot where, but a few hours ago, Hope had sat girt about in her shining armour, and where now Despair sat amid the ashes.

The defence of Calais, that great town, was over.

On the next morning, Jean de Vienne mounted painfully to the walls—for he was lame of a wound in the thigh, and moved with difficulty—and made signs to the English that he would parley.

King Edward's eyes flamed with triumph when the news was brought to him, for his time was come. At once he sent Sir Walter de Mauny and Lord Basset of Drayton to learn what the Governor of Calais had to say. And when those two were below the walls of Calais, Jean de Vienne leaned down to them, saying, "Good sirs, you are valiant knights and true, and know that the King of France, who is our seigneur, sent us here and ordered us to hold this town and château in such fashion that we might suffer no blame, and he, no loss. We have done all within our power, as you know right well. Good sirs, do you then beg your seigneur, that he have mercy on us, that he let us go as we came, and that he take the town and the château and all that is within them—and he will find enough and to spare."

Then answered Mauny :

"Messire Jean, we know something of the purpose of our lord, for he has told us of it. Know, then, that it is his will that all of you place yourselves without reserves in his power, to ransom or to slay as shall be his good pleasure."

Then Jean de Vienne straightened his bowed shoulders, and spoke out proudly.

"That we cannot consent to. We are here a handful of knights and esquires who have loyally, and with all our might, served the King of France, as you would serve your

own in a like case, and have endured much suffering and misery. But had we to suffer as never men have suffered before, we will not consent that the smallest young lad in the town suffer more grievously than the highest among us. It should suffice the king that he have us alone for prisoners. As for the poor folk of Calais, let him leave them to go their way in peace."

Then he stepped back from the wall, and Mauny and Basset took his words to King Edward. Hearing them, the King flamed with anger, and cried that he would have the lives of both the garrison and inhabitants. Then Mauny argued with him, saying, "It may well be, sire, that you would give us there a bad example. For if you send us into one of your fortresses, by the Holy Virgin, we will not go so willingly, if indeed you put these fighting-men to death as you say. For even so it will be done to us in a like case, however well we may do our duty." All the other barons and seigneurs agreed with Mauny on that point until at last the King, overborne, cried, "Fair sirs, I cannot stand alone against you all. I will ransom the knights and esquires of Calais; but the people of the town I will put to death, for they deserve it."

Then once again the gentle-hearted Mauny returned to the attack, for he knew that the angers of King Edward were but brief affairs, and the saving of a few minutes might mean the saving of many lives.

"Sire," he said, "never will you do such a thing, so great a cruelty, as to put these people to death. Take the town and the château and let the poor folk go. They will pray for you, and in foreign lands, wherever they may pass, they will speak well of you." King Edward's eyes began to twinkle at that.

"Walter, Walter," he cried, "things cannot be entirely as you would have them. The people of Calais have caused the death of many of my men, and some of them must die, too. But since you plead so glibly (and there are the

makings of a man of law in you), I will be satisfied with no more than this. Go back and say to Jean de Vienne that if he will send me six of the most notable burghers of Calais, bare-footed and bare-headed, clad only in their shirts and with ropes about their necks, I will be content to take my vengeance upon them, and let the rest of the townsfolk go free."

Then Mauny (who had the makings of a man of law in him) thought that he had pressed his case far enough, and that further appeal might mean an increase rather than a diminution of the sentence. He took himself back to where Jean de Vienne waited on the walls to hear the verdict. Hearing it, the Captain of Calais bent his head and went to make known the will of King Edward to the people of the town. To the Market Place he went, where, when he had caused the great bell to be rung, the people of the town came flocking to hear it in their turn. Like a stone cast into a dark pool it came to them, and the stir of their silent emotion spread and circled like ripples, until it filled the whole Market Place from side to side. Six of their richest burghers to be delivered up, bare-footed and bare-headed, clad only in their shirts and with ropes about their necks! A little shuddering sigh, like wind in dead grass, rose from the crowd of haggard-eyed men and women. Then the heavy, unnatural silence fell once more.

Blank-faced the people looked at Jean de Vienne, as though unable to believe that he, who had held them safe these eleven months past, should be powerless to help them now. But he looked back at them, and was as silent as they. He had sworn that the humblest little lad in all Calais should suffer no greater harm than he himself, and he would keep his word—but for those six great ones of the town he could do nothing—nothing.

The silence still hung, as anxious as the stillness that comes before earthquake or storm. Men's muscles twitched, their nerves cracked so that they almost cried out with the

pain of it ; but none spoke. Then of a sudden the dreadful strain was broken. There came a little stir, and a man stepped out from the throng, and came and stood face to face with Jean de Vienne and his two officers, Arnoul d'Audrehem and Jean de Surie. An old man he was, white-haired and white-bearded, but noble of bearing and of figure, despite his hunger-wasted body. "Eustache de Saint-Pierre !" the people whispered one to the other, for they recognized him, that stately old man, and he was one of the richest merchants of all Calais. "Eustache de Saint-Pierre !"

Eustache stood silent before the three officers for a little, and then he spoke, and the people shifted and craned the better to see him, to hear his words.

"My masters," he said, "great sorrow and misfortune it were for all, to leave such a people as these to die of hunger, or otherwise ; and a great charity and mercy would he win from Our Lord who would defend them from death. For me, I have great hope in the Lord that if, by my own death, I can save this people, I shall receive pardon for my sins ; wherefore will I be the first of the six, and of my own will place myself barefooted in my shirt, and with a halter about my neck, at the mercy of King Edward." Then, having spoken, he put his hands to the rich, fur-lined robe he wore and laid it aside, standing before the people in his long white undergarment. A sob of pitiful admiration went up from the crowd, and many came and knelt before him there, so that they might touch with their lips the hem of that linen shirt, symbol of their salvation.

Then there came forward Jean d'Aire, and cast down his robe beside that of Eustache de Saint-Pierre. Then two brothers, Jacques and Pierre de Wissant, stood forward side by side and made offering of their lives for the common good. After them came Jean de Fiennes and, hard at his heels, Andrieu d'Andre. There, in the Market Place, six men made ready to lay down their lives as they had laid

down their rich robes, and the humble folk of Calais town were saved.

“Seigneur, take us and deliver us up to the King of England, according to the terms of his treaty.” So spoke the burghers of Calais to Jean de Vienne; and he, torn between his pity and his desire to have done with the tragic business, sent men there and then to bring him the keys of the town and the château. These he gave into the hands of the six burghers, led them to the gates of the town, opened them for their passage, and then shut them to behind them. The burghers, when they heard that harsh clanging of the gates at their backs, hesitated a moment, as though the dreadful finality of the sound had shaken their courage. But when, looking back thus reluctantly at the closed gates of Calais, they saw the crowding mass of their fellow-townsmen looking down at them from the walls, their resolution was restored. “Farewell, good folk,” they said, “pray for us”; and they took themselves to where Mauny waited to lead them to the King.

King Edward, when he heard the sound of their coming, left his lodging to meet them in the open air, and the sight of his face left but little hope in the hearts of his prisoners. Nevertheless, with the keys of the submission of Calais in their hands and the ropes of their own submission about their necks, they came forward and knelt at his feet, saying, “Gentle sire and noble king, here are we six, who have been of the ancient bourgeoisie of Calais, and great merchants by land and by sea, and we bring you the keys of Calais, and render them to you at your goodwill. We set ourselves in such wise as you see, and at your pleasure, to save the remnant of the people, who have suffered most grievously. And may you have pity and mercy on us, for your high nobleness’ sake.”

The King looked at them coldly and in silence; and

when at last he spoke, it was to order that the headsman be sent for without delay. Then once more, the ever-pitiful Mauny spoke :

"Gentle Sire, curb your wrath. You have the renown of all goodness and nobility ; do not do this thing, which will diminish it. If you have no pity on these men who are at your mercy, all men will say that it was a great cruelty, to slay those who, of their own accord, have delivered themselves up for the saving of their fellows." But the King frowned.

"Mauny, Mauny," he cried sharply, "hold your tongue. It shall not be otherwise. The men of Calais have caused the death of so many of my men, that these, too, must die. Bring the headsman ! "

Then even Mauny the well-beloved dare say no more, and stood back. But there was one there who still dared face the wrath of the King, and that was the gentle Philippa. Silently she had followed after her husband, and silently she had stood beside him while he rendered his judgment. But now she spoke, and throwing herself at his feet, she cried, "My very dear lord, since I crossed the seas at great peril, as you well know, I have requested nothing of you. But now, I beg of you most humbly, in the name of the Son of the Holy Virgin, and by the love you bear me, that you have mercy on these men ! "

The King hesitated for a moment, then, half frowning, half smiling, he made reply.

"Lady," he said, "I would that you were anywhere but here. But since you so much desire it, I cannot say you nay. So, although it is sorely against my will, I give them to you. Do with them as you wish."

So were the people of Calais saved by six brave souls, and the burghers by one pitiful heart ; and so might Prince Edward have learned an even greater lesson than those harsh ones he had already mastered. Of his father he had learned how to win courageously ; of the King of

Bohemia, how to fail nobly ; and of his mother, he might have learned how to be merciful graciously—had he but wished.

And so on the 3rd of August 1347, the tall city of Calais fell, and so King Edward gained an open door into the kingdom of France, one that was to serve him well all his lifetime, and his country these two hundred years to come.

For a month the King and his family remained in Calais, while he made of it an English town, sending out the inhabitants to find homeselse where, and bringing over shiploads of his own subjects to take their places. At the same time he made a truce with King Philippe, to last one year, and by the terms of which both kings were to refrain from fomenting mischief against each other in Brittany, Flanders, or elsewhere, and all sieges in Brittany or Guienne were to be raised. And so peace fell on the land, and "thus passed the season without any war appearing, save only in Brittany ; but there men fight always."¹

On the 12th of August, King Edward took ship with his wife, his son, and his daughter, carrying with him his prisoners, Jean de Vienne, fifteen knights, and many wealthy folk of Calais, and set sail for home.

On the crossing, storms delayed him, so that that great monarch, who had humbled the King of France and taken the strong town of Calais, was outraged, and reproved the heavens, crying, "O blessed Virgin, what is the meaning of this ? Ever when I go to France I have fair weather ; but when I return to England, intolerable tempests." Whereupon the Mother of God, very properly abashed, stilled the "intolerable tempest" and smoothed the sea, so that the King of England was able to reach home in safety. On landing, he made a thank-offering on his murdered father's grave of a jewelled ship ; Queen

¹ Bourgeois de Valenciennes.

Philippa, of a golden heart ; and Prince Edward, of a cross of gold.

And now indeed, one might have thought that Edward the Black Prince could find occasion to flaunt himself and his not inconsiderable accomplishments before his cousin Joan, to his heart's content. But alas ! for once, Joan of Kent was too intent on her own affairs to pay much heed to those of her young kinsman. Joan of Kent was married, and married against her will, to William de Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, who had slipped quietly home after the battle of Crécy for that purpose. Joan had objected, but had given no sufficient reason for her objections, and so was married out of hand. But there came another, who also objected, and who moreover gave his reasons for so doing in no uncertain terms ; and that was Thomas Holland—Thomas of the Blind Eye, as he was called, Salisbury's own Steward of the Household. The good Thomas, who made up for what he lacked in birth by every quality that goes to the making of a very gallant gentleman, had been abroad fighting the "pagans" in Prussia ; and when he came home again, it was to find that Joan of Kent was married to Salisbury. Whereat Thomas made angry protest, and with good reason, since it now came to light that he himself had been married to Joan these two or three years past. Moreover, he was a husband in fact, and Salisbury, only in name.

So there was a great to-do and a bother at the Court of England when the royal family came home from the wars. King Edward roared, but not over loudly, for Holland was as good a fighting-man as he had ; Queen Philippa smiled, for such was her gentle nature ; while as for Prince Edward, he sulked blackly. Perhaps it was the scandal of so humble a mating for one of his own house that displeased him, but more likely, it was the fact that Joan should be married at all that made him ill-tempered and rough-

tongued with his cousin. But this he doubtless did not know, since he was a lad of a chilly nature—had he been less so, it is probable that Joan would never have married either Holland or Salisbury—but that is another story. As it was, she—who was as fiery as he was cold—shrugged her shoulders at his reproaches, and went off to help Holland write his appeal against Salisbury to Pope Clement VI. And in due course, that dignitary replied with his customary good sense that, since she had begun by living with Holland, she had better go on doing so. So that from that time forward, she who had been born Joan of Kent, who for a brief time had been Countess of Salisbury, became simple “Dame Holland,” and as such lost some of her glamour for her proud young cousin.

But whatever Prince Edward's regrets may have been, the people of England had none. They were pleased with their king, pleased with his victories, pleased above all with his peace; for “this peace being made, it seemed through England as though a new summer had followed because of the plentie of all things; for there was no woman of any name but she had some of the prizes of Caen and Calais and of other cities beyond ye seas, whereof ye matrones being proude did bragge in French apparell,”¹ and “English maides and matrones were bedecked up and trimmed with French women's jewels,” while “men of warre were so pestered with riches, that they wist not what to do therewith.”²

Yet for all that the returned warriors of Edward were so “pestered” with their wealth of fine garments and jewels, these things did little to pay for the expenses of the campaign, which had been a costly affair; and soon the people of England found that a fine French coat on their shoulders did little to make more tolerable the weight of taxation that went with it, and they murmured resentfully. Nor was the burden of King Edward's lavishness,

¹ Stow

² Holinshed.

where his wars were concerned, confined to England alone. Foreigners suffered from it, as well. In Italy the great family of bankers that were the Bardi went bankrupt because of the 900,000 gold florins they had had the misfortune to advance to the English king, while a like fate overtook the Peruzzi, who had lent 600,000 more. So while Edward's soldiers and their womenfolk rejoiced in their rich acquisitions, there were those both at home and abroad who had rather that he had stayed at home and left French fripperies to their original owners.

King Edward, in debt, acted after the fashion customary to the Plantagenets in such straits, and spent more lavishly than ever, perhaps thinking that to behave like a rich man is the next best thing to being one. From that October to the following April he gave nineteen sumptuous tournaments to celebrate his victories. To these brilliant affairs Prince Edward turned eagerly, for they sufficed to drive from his mind the trouble that his cousin Joan's marryings, divorcings, and re-marryings had lodged there, and which he took to be no more than the smart of his hurt family pride.

And then came an occasion so glorious beyond all others that, even if he had been aware of the true meaning of the vague uneasiness that stirred in him, would have put it very effectively to rest ; and that was the creation by his father of a new order of chivalry, the " Order of the Garter," as he called it. Some said that he named it so in memory of the lovely Countess of Salisbury's dropped garter, and others, of a less sentimental train of mind, claimed that " garter " had been the watchword at Crécy, and that the King would honour the memory of that great victory. However that may be, the order was a noble and glorious organisation, and one in which the Prince could not fail to be delighted to find himself enrolled.

It was made up of King Edward and his eldest son, of twenty-four canons, of twenty-four knights-companions with Lancaster at their head, and of twenty-four poor

knights, with an equal number of ladies, the "Dames de la Fraternité de Saint-George." Their habits were of a rich blue, the royal colour of France, the mantle and the surcoat of woollen cloth, lined with miniver, King Edward alone having his garments ornamented with the royal ermine. Never had there been so glorious and so costly a ceremony as that of the inauguration of the Order of the Garter, never had King Edward so fully satisfied his taste for noble and stately display as on that day. So greatly was his spirit soothed by it that he went so far as to permit the unhappy David Bruce of Scotland to come out of his prison long enough to gaze upon the glory of his more fortunate brother-king.

Yet all these noble affairs were somewhat marred by the inclemency of the weather, for morning, noon, and night, it rained without ceasing. For days upon end it rained, for weeks, for months, so that people's dwellings were made sodden without and musty within, their clothing mildewed in the presses, their crops rotted on the ground. "From midsummer to Christmas it continually rained; not one day and night were dry together."¹

Strange sights were seen, stranger tales told. Men spoke horrorstruck of showers of serpents, of whirlwinds of unnatural insects. An eclipse of the moon was seen, and "this year also a comet or blasing starre appeared with long and terrible streames passing from it."² At Avignon there appeared a great pillar of fire, and over Germany fell a rain of blood. John Wyclif thundered that the end of the world was at hand, and many believed him—and for many a poor soul it was so, indeed. For after the rains had made all things sodden and unhealthy, a strange new sickness broke out over the land. Out of mysterious China it came, where a great war had left behind it thousands of dead, lying unburied and rotting under the summer sun. It writhed its way through northern Africa where

¹ Holinshed.

² 167.

the Saracens, "seyng this veniauns (plague) amongst them, purposed verily to be Cristen. But whan thei wist that the pestilens was among the Cristen men, than her good purpose sesed."¹ (A singular lack of tact on the part of the plague.)

Having failed in its mission of converting all the Saracens at one blow, it crossed into Italy, where "scant the tenth person of an hundred was left alyve."² In Venice died 100,000 people, in Florence 60,000, in Sienna 70,000. Then the monstrous sickness stalked on into France. In Paris there died 50,000, in Saint Denis 14,000. Of the 140 members of the Preaching Friars of Montpellier only seven were left alive.

Then in one great stride the horror crossed the Channel, and clutched at England. A welter of death reigned in London, which buried 100,000 of its citizens, while in Yarmouth, out of a population of 10,000, less than 3000 remained at the end of that dreadful year. Nor was the family of the King himself respected, for at Bordeaux died his little fourteen-year-old daughter, Joan, then on her way to marry Don Pedro the Cruel of Spain. And it may be that, in that one instance, the plague was merciful.

Various were the reactions to this wave of sudden and unknown death. The Scots, ever practical, bethought them that now was the time to strike a decisive blow at their stricken enemy, and came flooding over the borders; but they only succeeded in carrying "the foul dethe of Engeland"³ back with them by way of loot. In France the blame for the catastrophe was laid at the door of the long-suffering Jews, who were in consequence persecuted, massacred, and burned in their thousands, until Pope Clement VI., to the eternal honour of himself and his Church, took them under his special protection and gave them asylum at Avignon, on Church lands. In Germany the strange, hysterical "Brotherhood of the Flagellants"

¹ Capgrave.

² Grafton.

³ Knighton.

came into being once more, its members wandering from town to town scourging one another in order to drive out the sin of which the disease was but the outward symptom.

Even into England they came, taking ship from Zee-land; and there in the streets of London they could be seen, wrapped from the waist to the heels in a white linen shroud, their upper bodies naked for the scourge. On their heads they wore a hood, marked with a red cross over the brow and over the nape of the neck, and each bore in his right hand a scourge with three thongs, tipped with sharpened nails. Scourging each other unmercifully, they marched through the streets, singing their hymns as they went. At every third step they flung themselves prostrate on the ground, their arms extended in the shape of a cross; then arose for another three steps, another three lashes of the scourge. And so doubtless they would have continued until they died of exhaustion or of the plague, had not Pope Clement proved that he was not only a man of heart but a man of sense as well, by forbidding their unpleasant practices on pain of excommunication.

But yet, for all the death and disaster that harassed the people, King Edward did not lose courage. At Christmas-time of that year he celebrated the festival as usual, wearing a doublet of white satin, on which was embroidered the device, "Hay, hay, the whyte Swan; by God's soule, I am thy man." Though in truth, the Black Death was more in evidence than any white swan, that year.

King Edward had left his great town of Calais under the governorship of one Aimeri de Pavie, an Italian of great courage, but whose moral qualities were less exalted. Just as long as Aimeri willed to hold Calais for the English, Calais would be held, King Edward could set his mind at rest on that score. But there came a day, late in the year 1349, when an even greater desire than that took hold of

Aimeri's heart ; and that was the desire to grasp the sack of 20,000 écus that Geoffroi de Charni, the French commander of Saint Omer, a town half a league distant from Calais, dangled before his nose. That sack of gold was to be had in exchange for the keys of the town of Calais ; and 20,000 écus outweighed those keys in the scales on which the Italian was wont to weigh the value of the things of this earth.

Aimeri de Pavie was perhaps not a strikingly honest man, but he was a clever one ; but for all that he made a mistake, as the cleverest of rogues will do at times ; he opened his mind to his secretary. Whereupon the secretary, either because he had a higher idea of loyalty than his master, or else a keener sense of the best policy, lost no time in communicating the interesting piece of news to King Edward. The King, as was more or less natural in the circumstances, was indignant, and sent for the erring governor. Aimeri de Pavie, ignorant of the betrayal of his secretary—or loyalty, according to the eye with which one looked at the matter—went, in all lightness of heart. King Edward asked no explanations, no excuses, of him, but suggested referring the matter to the public executioner. Aimeri was no coward, but he had a natural distaste for that worthy official. Moreover, he had a better plan to suggest, one more in keeping with his agile Italian wits and better suited to the preservation of his clever Italian head. He had tried to betray the English king to a French knight, but had been caught out ; so now he proposed quite simply to betray the French knight to the English king, and hope for better luck this time, acting, doubtless, on the assumption that two betrayals make a loyalty. King Edward was perhaps not struck with the high-minded nobility of the plan, but he nevertheless recognised its usefulness, and so agreed to its adoption. And Aimeri de Pavie went contentedly back to Calais, to try to diddle the Frenchman as he had failed to diddle the Englishman.

Now King Edward might have made complaint to King Philippe on the action of the commander of Saint Omer in trying to make himself master of Calais by treason, for England and France were at peace, the truce of 1347 having twice been prolonged, so that now it was to hold good till the middle of 1350, and so still had a good six months to run. But yet, either because he hesitated to cause a possible reawakening of hostilities, but more likely because he saw the chivalrous and romantic possibilities of dealing with the affair unofficially and incognito, as it were, he chose another course; a course that his eldest son approved of with all the strength of his turbulent young nature, too long held in check.

On a bitter cold day of December 1349 there arrived before Calais a little fleet of ships, from which disembarked King Edward and his son, with Sir Walter de Mauny and Earls of Stafford and Suffolk and Warwick, Lords John Montagu, Maurice Berkeley, de la Ware, and some 1000 fighting men. Silently as shadows the little troop disappeared within the walls of Calais, and as silently the gates shut to behind them.

Aimeri de Pavie had done everything in his power for the reception of his guests on that winter's day and for their entertainment on the bitter-cold night that was to follow. Edward listened to every detail of the programme of that entertainment, and approved of what had been done, and of what yet remained to do.

Late that night, Geoffroi de Charni left Saint Omer with 500 spears at his back, and arrived before Calais shortly before midnight. He had seen the French flag hoisted over the battlements of the place that day, and so knew that Aimeri was loyally keeping his word to him and that he had nothing to fear. Nevertheless he came cautiously. He detached one of his men, Edouard de Renti, with twelve knights and 100 spears, and giving him the sack with the 20,000 écus agreed upon, sent him forward

to the château of Calais to exchange the gold for the promised keys. He himself took up his post with the bulk of his men near the gates of the town.

De Renti and his men crept silently forward, crossed the drawbridge, and rapped lightly upon the doors of the château. These opened as he had expected, and there was Aimeri clamouring for his pieces of gold before he would let them in, crying, "Are they all there?" "By my faith, yes," replied de Renti, and he handed over the sack of gold. Then Aimeri stood aside and let the Frenchmen pass into the courtyard, saying, "Wait here a moment, then, while I fetch the keys of the town, for I have them ready for you in the château."

De Renti smiled to himself, all unsuspecting, for he imagined that the Italian was bent on counting his money in private before giving up the keys, and he knew that he had nothing to fear, since the pieces of gold had been well and accurately numbered. Secure in the consciousness of the honesty of at least that detail of the generally dishonest business, he waited patiently. But of a sudden his amused picturing of the Italian counting his 20,000 pieces of gold was rudely interrupted by such a crashing as made it seem as though the whole château of Calais were tumbling about his ears. Instantly he leaped for the door, with the soldier's instinctive reaction to the danger of being taken in a trap. But he was too late. There, at his feet, was the moat, and at the bottom of it lay the splintered remains of the bridge that had spanned it but a moment ago, together with the great boulder of rock which, sent hurtling down from the top of a tower, had caused the wreckage. Barely had de Renti the time to ask himself the meaning of this breaking of the drawbridge when he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and heard a voice that spoke in his ear, saying, "Did you think to have the keys of Calais for the asking?"

It is probable that de Renti had thought to do no more than obey the orders he had received; and those

were to enter and occupy the château of Calais, while de Charni, once he had received the keys, did the same by the town. De Renti had carried out the first of his orders, and had entered the château; and now it looked as though, whether he liked it or not, he would have to carry out the second, and occupy it, though not in the manner he had planned; for, turning at the sound of the mocking voice that spoke to him, he found himself face to face with Sir Walter de Mauny, and a strong body of English fighting-men. These latter having already diligently swept up the little troop of Frenchmen, there remained nothing for de Renti to do but to go on occupying the château of Calais—or such small portion of it as Mauny might see fit to allot to him.

Meanwhile, in the town itself, Prince Edward waited impatiently behind the closed Boulogne gate. He was not in his famous black armour, but was clad as a simple knight, as was also his father, who waited with no greater patience behind the gates on the land side of the town. And now at last came the longed-for signal from the château. The gates crashed open, and the two royal warriors, with their following of steel-clad men behind them, dashed out and flung themselves with a mighty shock upon the Frenchmen of Charni who, frozen but hopeful, still waited for the promised keys.

Charni was outnumbered, and moreover he was taken unawares; but he had with him such men as Jean de Landas, Eustache de Ribault, Hector and Gauvin de Bailleul, and the Sire de Crequi, all hardy fighters, and who stood their ground firmly.

"Mauny! Mauny!" yelled the Prince as he hurled himself into the mass, and "Mauny! Mauny!" he heard his father answer from the far side of the press. Both father and son had come on this adventure as simple knights, and they rallied the banner and raised the cry of him whom they, of a common accord, agreed to be the best

fitted to captain so chivalrous an affair—and that was Walter de Mauny.

Prince Edward was no stripling now, but a lusty, two-handed warrior, in all the vigour of his young manhood's nineteen years. Nor was he without experience in warfare; but never had he known such a fight as this! At Crécy he had done more than well for his years, but he had been surrounded by anxious guardians of his royal person, who watched him as a young mother watches her first-born. At Calais he had only to sit back while his father directed the siege, in which there was no noble part to be played by the young lad that he then was. But here he fought as a simple knight, his friends took no heed for his safety, and his foes were not held back by a knowledge of his true rank. Here he pitted his young strength and skill against the tried endurance and experience of the Frenchmen who, not knowing who he might be, strove not to capture, but to kill. For the first time he felt what it was like to fight hand to hand and breast to breast for his very life, unhelped and unhampered by his rank, and he found it good. So he cried "Mauny! Mauny!" with the best of the English knights and esquires, and listened for the answering "Mauny!" of his father.

The Frenchmen had lost the game with the taking of de Renti, and prudence should have told Geoffroi de Charni to take himself and his men back to Saint Omer with all possible speed, and hope for better luck another time. But prudence was seldom a virtue—or a failing—of the men of those days, and the theory of living to fight another day had not yet come into fashion. Men preferred to fight, if it were possible, to-day; and if good fortune left them alive to fight on another day as well, then so much the better. So now the Frenchmen turned hardily to meet their assailants, and Prince Edward found an enemy worthy of his steel.

All through that bitter cold night the fight went on,

and by the time the grey light of dawn began to show men the faces of their opponents, the ground was strewn with the dying and the dead, and the reek of blood rose like steam from the frozen ground. And now Prince Edward was able not only to hear the strong, clear voice of his father, but to see his tall person, kingly for all the simple armour that disguised it. King Edward was at grips with a French knight, and Prince Edward paused to watch, for the sight of a King of England engaged in single combat with a simple knight is not a common one, and even a Prince of Wales may find it worthy his attention. And now Prince Edward saw a stranger sight even than that, which was King Edward brought to his knees by that same simple knight. Aghast, as though paralysed with amazement, the young man watched; but almost before he was down, his father was up again and fighting as hardily as before. Then once more the strange thing happened, and this time the King did not rise. Prince Edward's amazement gave way to horror then, for another minute and his father would be taken or slain. Crying this time "Ha! Edward Saint George!" he rushed forward and thrust himself between the fallen King and his opponent; and such was the fury of his attack that he drove his enemy back long enough for his father to get to his feet once more, and the Frenchman, for all his great prowess, was forced to declare himself vanquished. And so did Prince Edward save his father and his king, and so did he take, with his own hand, the bravest of the Frenchmen, Eustache de Ribauumont.

With the fall of Ribauumont, the French gave way, and such as had not already been taken by death, gave themselves up to the English.

Father and son both had reason for pride on that day: one for his own prowess and the other for the prowess of his heir, and both for the saving of Calais. Many were the noble Frenchmen taken prisoner, and because, if the King

loved a good fight he loved a good fighter better, he decided to do them honour. Each was given attendants to help him wash away the sweat and blood of the battle, each was given fine new garments to take the place of his battered armour; then all were led to the banqueting hall, where a rich feast awaited them.

The King sat at table with them, affable and well pleased with the whole business; while Prince Edward and the younger knights of his own age, to do greater honour to the prisoners, served them at the first course with their own hands, and then took their places humbly at a lower table.

After the tables had been cleared of the meats and the sweet wines and spices set upon them, the King went among his guests, calling each courteously by name, and talking gaily of the night's doings. Only at Geoffroi de Charni he looked askance, and at first would not speak with him. But presently his good humour overcame his just irritation against the man who had tried to win Calais from him by treachery, and going up to him, he said, "Messire Geoffroi, I have a right to feel some little bitterness towards you, since you have tried to take from me that which is mine and which cost me so dearly. You thought to make a better bargain than I with your 20,000 écus; but God came to my aid, as I hope He will ever come to my aid in a like case, and you have failed in your enterprise." Then leaving Charni, whom he judged to have dishonoured himself, he went to Eustache de Ribeaumont, whom he judged to have gained more honour than any other man that night. And his words to him were spoken in a different tone.

"Messire Eustache," he said, "you have fought more gallantly than I have ever seen knight in all the world do. Never has man in any battle I have ever been in given me so fierce a struggle as did you this night." Then he took a chaplet of pearls that he wore about his head and set it

upon Eustache's, saying, "I bestow this gift upon you in witness of my esteem for your prowess, and it is my wish that you wear it one year for my sake. I know you to be gay and courtly and to take great delight in the company of ladies; tell them all from whence you had this gift. And now I acquit you of your ransom, and to-morrow you are at liberty to go wherever it may please you."

So did King Edward distribute his praise and his blame. And never for an instant did it occur to the mind of his son that it was a strange thing that the ignoble treachery of a nobly born Geoffroi de Charni should be paid for with no more than a reproof,¹ while the humbly born burghers of Calais had come near to paying for their sublime self-sacrifice with their heads.

In June of the next year, 1350, the truce was prolonged for another twelve months; and in August of that same year died King Philippe VI., that King of France, of whom "it seemed that he had only to attempt an undertaking for it to fail," and who was "ever unfortunate, almost without fault of his."² In his place reigned his son, the red-headed Duke of Normandy, under the name of Jean II., who was to be no more fortunate than his father had been before him, but of whom it could never be said that the fault did not lie with him.

Another king died in that year, and that was Alphonso of Castile, leaving his throne to his son Pedro, who soon earned for himself the surname of "the Cruel." But Pedro had had an elder brother, who had left a young son, Charles de la Cerda, or Charles d'Espagne, as he was more commonly called, who had a prior right to the throne over

¹ The Italian, Aimeri de Pavie, paid more dearly for his treachery than his accomplices. Making a raid from Calais to Saint Omer in the following year, he was caught by Geoffroi de Charni, who put him to death for having betrayed "both the French and the English kings in the space of one day."

² Abbé de Cholsy.

Pedro. And even as in Brittany the kings of France and England had upheld each his own candidate for the ducal coronet, the Counts of Blois and of Montfort, so now in Spain they did the same. Pedro was supported by King Edward who, save for the death of little Princess Joan, would have been his father-in-law; while the cause of Charles d'Espagne was favoured by the King of France, either because he was his cousin, or more likely because he thought by so doing to be able to do mischief to the King of England without openly breaking the truce.

Emboldened by the support of France, Spanish pirate ships began to harry the coast of England. Beginning as mere acts of piracy, these raids became so daring, and the fleets that undertook them so important, that it soon became clear that they were no simple acts of piracy but of organised aggression.

Early in August there came the disquieting news that forty Spanish ships had assembled at Sluys, and that their object was the invasion of England. King Edward sent word to the Archbishop of Canterbury, bidding him and all his clergy pray for the safety of the land. Then he went down to Winchelsea and took ship on the *Cog Thomas*. With him, though not on the flag-ship, went Prince Edward, and in his care was placed his little ten-year-old brother, John of Gaunt, Earl of Richmond. There took ship, too, the Earls of Lancaster, Warwick, Salisbury, Suffolk, Arundel, Hereford, and Northampton, with some four hundred knights.

All day they cruised and saw nothing, and on the next day, a Sunday, to while away the time, King Edward, clad in a blue velvet tunic and a hat of black beaver "that became him right well,"¹ sat on the deck of his flagship and listened to a concert given by his minstrels. Presently John Chandos himself got up to sing, and as Sir John's voice was as pleasing as his personality, he was listened to

¹ Froissart

with eagerness. But scarcely had the good knight begun his warbling when there came a great clamour from the look-out in the castle of the flagship, who shouted, "Ha! I see one coming that looks like a Spaniard!" Then, before the knights had time to leap to their feet, "I see two," he cried. "I see three, four—God help me, I see so many that I cannot count them!"

"Sound the trumpets!" shouted the King, "and get the ship under way!"

Prince Edward heard the clamour of the trumpets and the shouting from his father's ship, and called for his arms; and even as his attendants buckled on his armour, he saw them, the great Spanish galleons, come surging up over the horizon like wind-blown clouds. But there was little of the cloud about them as they came bowling down on the little English ships, towering over them "as castles to cottages."¹ Yet for all the menace they brought with them, they were a lovely sight with their high, gilded and painted prows, their multicoloured embroidered sails, and their brilliant pennons so long that they trailed in the sea behind them. Ay, a lovely sight. But Prince Edward was not easily moved by beauty. What did make his heart leap in his bosom was the sight of his father's vessel, the good *Cog Thomas*, standing out to meet the leading Spaniard, a mighty ship before which the *Thomas* seemed of little more importance than a nutshell. With a rending crash the two came together, the *Thomas* reeling under the shock but hanging on gamely, while the mast of the great Spaniard went overboard, carrying with it all the men in her castle.

But Prince Edward had no more time to admire the prowess of his father; he had work of his own, and in plenty, to attend to. All along the line the ships were grappling now, and from their towering decks the Spaniards sent down avalanches of stones and bars of iron, that

¹ The Rover,

crashed through the planking of their smaller adversaries as though they had been egg-shells. Nor had the English archery such deadly results as it had been wont to enjoy, for the plunging and lurching of the fighting ships discommoded the aim of the users of the long-bow, who had to steady the extremities of their weapons on the reeling decks, whereas those who handled the cross-bow, slower of action and shorter of range though it might be, were not so hampered.

But, for all that the English vessels were smaller than their adversaries, they were more numerous and more agile in their movements. So they clustered about the huge galleons like ants about a caterpillar, and already many of the Spaniards began to give signs of distress under their venomous sting. On either side they took the Spaniards, grappling fiercely, and the English sailors came swarming over the bulwarks, climbing like cats. Once on the decks, a terrible butchery took place, for the cry was "No quarter!" Many a Spaniard might have been willing to surrender then had his opinion been asked, but the English cleared the decks by the simple process of hurling their adversaries willy-nilly into the sea, "English chivalry being unfortunately in no chivalrous mood in this vindictive encounter."¹ But it is doubtful if the Spaniards themselves were in any more chivalrous state of mind, for, as the ever-vivacious Froissart tells us, "the Spaniards know not how to do a courtesy, they are like the Germans." So perhaps a certain lack of that courtesy on the part of the English may be forgiven them, as they doubtless knew the habits of their opponents.

And now a great galleon loomed up over Prince Edward's little ship and grappled fiercely. Down came the hail of stone and iron missiles, and the English ship staggered beneath it. In vain the archers strove to drive back the casters of them, they in their turn were driven back by

¹ Macbinnon.

the crossbow-men. Shortly Prince Edward's vessel was little better than a mass of wreckage, held on the surface of the sea by the grappling-irons more than anything else. In vain his men tried to board; the Spaniards were too numerous for them, and flung them down as fast as they could come up. To climb the side of that great ship was like trying to scale a mountain in the face of an avalanche. Looking up at it, Prince Edward and his suite must have felt that there was little hope left for them in this world, while little Prince John may well have thought that his mother's lap was a pleasanter place on which to spend a fine summer's day than was the deck of one of his father's ships of war.

Their vessel was sinking under their very feet now, and the only way to escape drowning seemed to be to exchange their own deck for that of their adversary; but of that there seemed to be little hope, since the faces of the Spaniards that looked down upon them were singularly lacking in cordiality. But of a sudden those unwelcoming faces were snatched away, as a great clamour of trumpets and shouting went up from the far side of their ship. Prince Edward did not stay to meditate on the meaning of this phenomenon, but took prompt advantage of it to scramble over the now undefended bulwarks of his enemy, he and his little brother and their suites, and find safety on her decks. And even as he abandoned his own vessel, she gave a great lurch and went plunging down under the waters.

Once aboard the galleon he was able to see and hear what was taking place. The Earl of Lancaster and his men were swarming up over the far side of the Spaniard, crying lustily, "Derby to the rescue!" as they came; for Lancaster had seen the danger that threatened his young kinsman, and had indeed come to the rescue, grappling and boarding the galleon on the opposite side to that on which Prince Edward's little ship plunged in its

death-struggle. Hearing the rousing cry of "Derby to the rescue!" the Spaniards had turned away from their prey to meet their aggressors, and at the same time the Prince came aboard and took them from the rear. Caught thus between two fires, the Spaniards had little choice but to obey the urgings of their unwelcome guests, and vacate their ship for the only other haven that offered itself—the sea.

From the deck of the tall galleon, the Prince could cast his eye over the fight and see how things were going for his side—and that was exceedingly well. Everywhere the little English ships clung to their huge adversaries like wasps about ripe fruit, and everywhere they had the advantage of their unwieldy victims. But night was falling now, and it was difficult to see anything save that the Spaniards were getting the worst of the encounter. The Spaniards, too, grasped the situation, and under cover of the oncoming night they crowded on sail—such of them as had sails left or spars on which to spread them—and made good their escape.

All night the English fleet cruised, in the hopes of catching a laggard or one more hardy than his fellows. But the Spaniards had had enough, and when day dawned, the sea was empty of them. Some had disappeared over the horizon but still more under the waves, and seventeen were taken; so that "there escaped but few of the Spaynardis."¹

After that great naval victory, King Edward made, in August 1351, a treaty with the maritime ports of Castile and Biscay. Then Pope Clement VI., thinking perhaps that this was a sign of a more pacific state of mind of the English king, made a supreme effort to bring about a lasting peace between England and France.

But as King Edward could in no wise be persuaded to address the new King of France otherwise than as "Jean,

¹ Capgrave.

son of Philippe de Valois," the Pope's intercession came to no good end. Whereat Jean, by way of thrusting out his tongue in reply, invested the English town of Saint Jean d'Angely in Guienne, and proceeded to starve out its garrison. Edward sent John de Beauchamp to the rescue, but the good John, while he managed to catch two Frenchmen of note, Guy de Nesle and Arnoul d'Audrehem, was unable to relieve the place, which shortly surrendered to the French king.

In the next year, 1352, Pope Clement died, and was replaced by Innocent VI. King Edward, thinking perhaps that the new Pope would offer him more substantial support than Clement had done, and wishing, doubtless, to prove that he was not behind anybody in his earnest desire for peace, made an offer to the French king. He would, he said, give up his claim to the throne of France if King Jean would compensate him by ceding the trifling territories of Guienne, Normandy, and Ponthieu, all in full sovereignty, together with his conquests up to date in Brittany, and the overlordship of Flanders. Not unnaturally, perhaps, King Jean refused this obliging offer; but a renewal of the peace was nevertheless signed, to hold good to 1355. Thus, save for minor squabbings in Guienne and in Brittany where the parties of Blois and Montfort still carried on their struggle for the ducal coronet with characteristic Breton stubbornness, despite the fact that Blois was a prisoner in England, Montfort dead, and his son still an infant, some measure of peace reigned over Europe. In Spain, Pedro the Cruel occupied the throne, while his dispossessed nephew, Charles d'Espagne, took refuge in France with his cousin, King Jean, who made him Constable of France in the place of the Count d'Eu, whom he had beheaded for attempting to cede the town of Guynes to Edward by way of paying his ransom.

In England, not even such slight distractions as these came to lighten the existence of the Black Prince. Nothing

of note took place in that country save that, in 1353, there came a terrible drought, "wherefore al fruttys, sedis, and erbis, for the most part, was lost,"¹ to such an extent that "Ynglond, that was wont to fede othir londis, was fayn to be fed with othir londis."²

But even a Prince of Wales cannot march against the gods of the weather and force them to reasonable behaviour; so there was little else for Prince Edward to do but to sit at home and pray, if not for a cessation of the drought, then at least for a cessation of the peace. It is true that he had occasion to quell an uprising in his Earldom of Cheshire, but the hanging of yokels and country louts can never be compared, as a pastime, with the spitting of gentle knights on a lance. So Prince Edward got little pleasure of his punitive expedition, though some profit, for the aforesaid yokels, enjoying the proceedings little more than did their Earl, bought him off for 5000 marks of gold.

Aside from such petty doings as these, time hung heavy on his hands, and he had nothing better to do than to scowl morosely at the outward signs of the marital felicity of his cousin Joan. In 1351 she bore a son, Thomas, to her good husband Thomas Holland. In 1352 a second son, Edmond, made his appearance, to be joined in 1353 by another, John. At that Prince Edward could endure no more, and persuaded his father to appoint the over-faithful Holland to be his lieutenant in Brittany, so that for a space, at least, Joan's fruitfulness was checked, and the Prince's obscure annoyance soothed.

Both England and France were impoverished by wars, exhausted by the plague; but in spite of that, or perhaps because of it, money was spent as never before on dress and luxuries. Never before had fashion been so extreme or so complicated. In France, women shaved off their eyebrows and dyed their hair with saffron; while the men

¹ *The Brut.*

² Capgrave.

wore their garments so long that they swept the ground, even when they went a-horseback, "which was not well for good fighting men,"¹ or else so short that "in stooping, they indecently displayed their breeches, and that which was within them."² Both men and women decorated their dress with a multitude of little buttons, of silver or gold or even precious stones, which served to fasten the front of their tunics from the hem to the top of its extraordinarily high collar, and the sleeves from wrist to elbow. These long, tight-fitting sleeves served to give the note of elegance to a costume; but in order that sumptuousness also might be served, another detachable pair was worn, slit up to the shoulder, voluminous in cut, dagged about the edges, and so long that they trailed upon the ground. This accessory was often the most expensive part of the whole costume, being jewelled and embroidered, and lined up with costly cloth of gold or silver or the rarest of furs. (And it may be remarked in passing that it is to this extravagant article of costume that we owe our expression, "That is another pair of sleeves.") So greatly did the French gentle-folk, and especially the men, lavish money upon their dress, that it was said of many a seigneur that he wore his county upon his back.

Nor were their cousins across the Channel in any way behind them in gorgeousness or vanity of apparel; for "the Englishmen so much followed and counterfeated the madnesse and the folly of the strangers, that . . . they daily changed their apparel, sometimes long and wide, and at another time, cutted short and straight, and altogether unseemly and dishonest. And the apparel of the women was more fond than the men. For their clothes were made so streyt to their bodys that for their foolishe pride the Scottes deryded and made foolishe rimes and jests of them."³

King Edward, for all his own love of dress and display,

¹ Jean Douchet.

² Moine de Saint Denis.

³ Caxton.

frowned on a too great exhibition of those tastes among his subjects. He passed sumptuary laws; none but members of the royal family, bishops, or peers, might wear clothing cut and sewn abroad, while only those with incomes of over £100 a year might wear foreign stuffs, but they must have them fashioned at home. Garments of velvet, ermine, squirrel, and miniver, and ornaments of gold were reserved for those of knightly rank, or over. While as for that important sisterhood which has changed only in name throughout the ages, they were condemned to wear their dresses—inside out! Here the French proved themselves more gallant, for in their country the obligatory badge worn by those lovely but frail ladies, was a golden girdle.

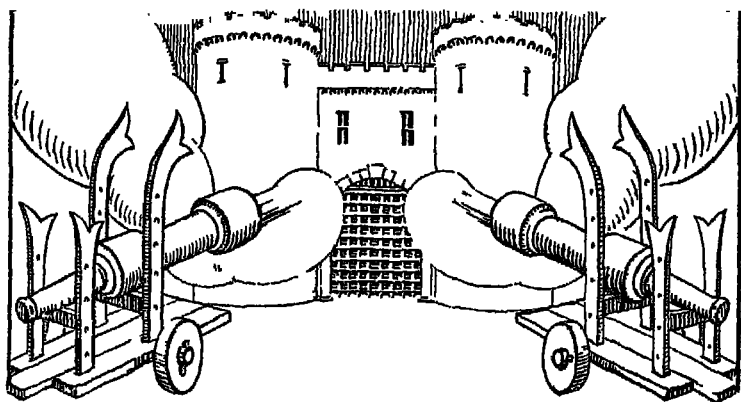
These laws suffered the usual fate of such regulations, which was to be completely ignored. Rich merchants continued to swagger it in velvet gowns, and their wives and daughters to confine their tresses in golden nets. For with every soldier out of France coming home laden with costly loot—and especially Lancaster's men, who found such rich booty in the south that they would no longer take the trouble to carry away any clothing save only cloth of gold and silver, or dyed plumes—there was little hope of preventing them from wearing their gaudy prizes. So the cloth of gold and silver of the south were worn by all and sundry, in spite of the laws of Edward, as were those newer materials just invented by the French, gauze and sarcinet. Nor did the humbler folk of the kingdom find a good example of Spartan simplicity in their leaders, for King Edward himself went arrayed as never was Solomon in all his glory, while Edward his son clad himself more nobly than did ever "the Kings of France the royal, or that Emperor of Rome in the fields, Nero."¹

¹ Cavalier

PART THREE

" Onques roys Alixandres, qui conquist maint royon,
Ne se porta si fier, ne de tel façon."

CUVELIER.



PART THREE

IN 1355 the truce came to an end ; and with King Edward resolutely refusing to sacrifice the golden fleurs-de-lys on his shield, and King Jean as resolutely refusing to sacrifice Normandy and Brittany, war was inevitable.

King Edward had found—or thought he had found—a powerful and valuable ally in France, in the person of Charles le Mauvais, King of Navarre. Now Charles of Navarre was one of the most brilliant princes of that brilliant age ; but unfortunately “ the splendid talents of the prince qualified him only to do mischief.”¹ He was the son-in-law of Jean, having married the French king’s daughter, Jeanne. And not only was he the son-in-law of the King of France, but according to his own way of looking at things, he was himself the King of France, for he was a grandson, through his mother, of Louis X., himself eldest son of Philippe IV., le Bel. But the Salic law had said him nay, and he had had to content himself with the meagre compensation of the little Kingdom of Navarre. “ Content ” is perhaps an ill-chosen word to apply to Charles le Mauvais, for he was never content with anything whatsoever, save only himself. He had married King Jean’s daughter, and then, finding that the financial

¹ Hume.
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benefits of the match were not so great as he could have desired, he had attempted to corrupt—and some said, to poison—Jean's eldest son, the Dauphin Charles. In this he had failed, but had been more successful over the matter of killing Jean's cousin and bosom friend, Charles d'Espagne, Constable of France. Still further to express his displeasure with his father-in-law, he now proposed to betray him, by inviting King Edward over into Normandy, where he had large estates, and where, he announced inaccurately but persuasively, "all the nobles are with me, for life or for death."¹

King Edward accepted his amiable offer of treason, for he had not as yet learned to refrain from putting his trust in this particular prince. So it was agreed that while he himself supported Charles in Normandy, a second English army should strike simultaneously in Brittany. For this purpose it was necessary that a leader of greater authority than simple Thomas Holland should have charge of the English party in the duchy, so the worthy husband of Joan of Kent was recalled, Lancaster being named in his place.

Prince Edward was perhaps a disapproving witness of this reuniting of husband and wife, but he was fortunately not called upon to witness the results of it—a daughter, Joan—for he, in his turn, was given an important part to play in the coming descent upon France.

One fine spring morning in 1355 there came to England a delegation of Gascons, headed by Jean de Grailly, known as the Captal de Buch, who was the most valiant of all those valiant fighting men who are the Gascons.

Prince Edward, we are told, was greatly rejoiced at his coming, for he knew the nature of his mission—which was none other than to beg of King Edward that he send a representative of his own family to govern Gascony. The Gascon seigneurs were as yet satisfied with English

¹ Letter of Charles le Mauvais to King Edward.

rule, for in the first place England bought their wine, and in the second place, as subjects of King Edward, they were at liberty to plunder the surrounding country to their hearts' content—if it be possible to satisfy the heart of a Gascon where plunder is concerned—whereas as subjects of King Jean, such activities would be frowned upon. So they were then willing enough to fight for King Edward in the coming struggle, but since Gascons have a rooted distaste for obeying Gascons, they desired that the King send them a leader under whose orders they could serve without hurt to their sensitive pride.

Hearing this, Prince Edward "took fresh courage,"¹ and going to his father, said, "Sire, for God's sake, you know that in Gascony the noble and valiant knights love you so greatly that they suffer much pain for your war and to gain you honour, yet they have no leader of your blood. But if you should be so advised as to send them one of your sons, they would be all the bolder."

Prince Edward himself, apparently, was not sufficiently bold to suggest which son should be sent, but it is probable that his father grasped his meaning without difficulty. And what other son than that one who now stood before him could he send? His second son, William of Hatfield, had not lived; his third, Lionel of Antwerp, had spent all of his seventeen years and much of his energy in the making of the great seven-foot body he had, so that little time or strength had been left over for the development of his wits. Handsome, courageous, courtly he was, and gentle—too gentle for such a mission. The fourth son of the King, John of Gaunt, was as intelligent as Lionel was beautiful, as ambitious as he was gentle—but he was only fifteen, and even in those days fifteen was too young for the governing of a great province in times of war.

Prince Edward, then, had little to fear as to his father's choice, so that if it was with great pride and satisfaction,

¹ Chandos Herald

it was with little surprise that he heard himself named King's Lieutenant in Gascony, with the right to receive homage, and to render "*haute, moyenne, et basse justice*."

On the 8th of September he set sail from Plymouth with 400 ships, bearing the Earls of Pembroke, Suffolk, and Oxford, Lords Montague, Basset, Mohun, and Cobham, Bartholomew de Burghersh the younger, Edward le Despenser, Sir James Audley, and Sir John Chandos—"the flower of chivalry and right noble bachelery."¹ With them went 1000 men-at-arms, 2000 archers, and a large body of Welsh knife-men. And thus, at the age of twenty-five, Prince Edward, the Black Prince, set out on his first independent command.

On the 20th of September the fleet entered the harbour of Bordeaux, and the Prince set foot for the first time on the soil of Gascony. On the next day he went in state to the Cathedral of Saint-André to receive the oaths of his new subjects. There were gathered all the great Gascon seigneurs, all the rich bourgeois of Bordeaux. There was Bernard, Sire d'Albert and Viscount of Tartas; Amauri de Biron, Sire de Montferrant; Auger de Montaut, Sire de Mussidon and Blaye; Guillaume Amanier, Sire de Roson; Petiton, Sire de Curton; Amanieu de Forsard, and Guillaume Sans, Sire de Lesparre. All looked their fill at their new lieutenant, and all were satisfied with what they saw—and well they might be, for the Black Prince in his twenty-fifth year was as noble a figure of young manhood as one could wish to see. He was tall and well-proportioned, handsome of face and of figure, with that comeliness, that vigour, which was the birthright of the Plantagenets.

Their quick Gascon eyes saw in him at once an able leader of men, a virile captain of soldiers; and they were not mistaken. But had they looked at him with their

¹ Chandos Herald

warm Gascon hearts as well, they might have seen that two things at least, two things that are dear above all to the southern soul, were lacking in him: humour and kindliness. Your Gascon's eyes can flame with cruelty, but they can also soften with tears, while Prince Edward's were as fierce and as changeless as those of a bird of prey. Gascon lips can blaspheme as can few others, but they can also utter the tenderest words that the spirit of man has ever imagined. Prince Edward's lips could laugh, but they seldom smiled. Gascon hearts are for ever at fever-pitch, be it with love or with hate; that of Prince Edward was cold as pride, cold as ambition unsatisfied. But the Gascon seigneurs in the Cathedral of Saint-André looked at him out of the eyes of the natural born fighting men that they were, and those eyes were satisfied; satisfied with the arrogant thrust of the jaw that spoke of courage, the proud carriage of the head that betokened the capable leader of men; satisfied with the wide sweep of shoulder that bore witness of physical strength, with the fine dignity of bearing that was proof of noble birth. They were satisfied, and came forward willingly to pay their homage.

First of all the Prince himself took oath, swearing on the Evangiles to Thomas Roos, the Mayor of Bordeaux, to be a good and loyal lord, and to respect the rights, liberties, customs, and privileges of the city and the province. Then the seigneurs in their turn laid their hands on the sacred book, and swore to be good and faithful subjects, to aid and maintain their lieutenant, defend and reconquer his rights against whosoever might attack them. And so Prince Edward became King's Lieutenant in Gascony, and so all the Gascon lords swore to serve him.

But yet not all took that oath; for there was one who did not come to the Cathedral of Saint-André on that day, and that was Gaston III., Count of Foix and Viscount of Béarn.

Gaston de Foix was one of the handsomest of men who

ever trod the soil of southern France, and that is saying a good deal. So great was his beauty that men had surnamed him "Phœbus"; yet he was no blazing sun-god of a man; rather was he like some ivory saint, delicately carved, and exquisite in every least detail of limb and feature, slender as a reed, and not tall. But for all his fragile seeming, he had the aloof pride of a royal gerfalcon, and its fierce temper.

He had been King Philippe's Lieutenant-General in the Languedoc, and although little more than a child, had fought loyally at Crécy for that king; but, brother-in-law of Charles of Navarre, he had been suspected by King Jean of complicity with that prince in the murder of Charles d'Espagne, and on that account imprisoned in the Châtelet. Released very shortly, and with his escutcheon spotless, he had nevertheless suffered deeply from the momentary suspicion that had rested upon him. His pride of a Gascon, and still more his pride of a Count of Foix, had bitterly resented the humiliation put upon him, and he came back to Gascony white and mute with anger. There his outraged dignity had been still further hurt by the discovery that his office of Lieutenant-General of Languedoc had not only been taken from him, but had been confided to his fellow-countryman, neighbour, and deadly enemy, Jean, Count of Armagnac.

On the surface the feud between Armagnac and Foix was due to a quarrel over certain territories in the Bigorre; but inwardly their mutual dislike went deeper, for it was the outcome of the utter dissimilarity, mental, moral, and physical, of the two men. While Foix was all delicacy and refinement, Armagnac was a blunt, brusque, hard-spoken man, but nevertheless an able governor and captain of men. Mastiff and greyhound, neither could see either the sense or the utility of the other.

King Jean, as was his tactful custom, had done everything necessary to alienate the loyalty of the young count by first rubbing his pride raw with insult, and then shaking

the salt of injury over the wound. But the pride of the Counts of Foix was more a family than a personal affair, and their family had always been loyal to the throne of France. So while Gaston withdrew to his château of Orthez, where he sat and brooded bitterly over his wrongs, he yet could not bring himself to take the vengeance that was offered to his hand—reply favourably to Prince Edward's letter summoning him to the homage at Bordeaux. Instead, he took out his ill-humour on the English prince, sending him in reply a letter of his own in which was nothing but a painting of three figs—a deadly insult, it would seem, in those times, though we have no means of knowing why. So Prince Edward had to do without the allegiance of the Count of Foix for the time being, but he did nothing further to goad the already bitterly angry young man, and in that he was wiser than King Jean—wiser, perhaps, than himself, for such forbearance was not his habit. It may be that it was due to the sage advice of long-headed John Chandos, who had been attached to the Prince by his father, King Edward, in order that he might act as a brake on a car of State that might, otherwise, be a thought too rashly driven.

But with or without the Count of Foix, Prince Edward had men, and in plenty, for his present needs. He had those devils on horseback that were the Gascon cavalry, and he had the great English infantry which, with the Scots, the Swiss, and the Flemings, was reckoned to be the hardest in the world. And if it had to admit the rivalry of those three for courage, in deadliness it was peerless ; for whereas they fought at close quarters with their spears, the English fought from a distance with their all-conquering yew-bows, giving death but not receiving it. Yes, Prince Edward had all he could desire, both in quality and quantity of men, for his undertaking, which was to be a monster raid throughout southern France, while his father did likewise in the north.

His father had, indeed, landed at Calais, prepared to join forces with Charles of Navarre, but little had come of the expedition, for King Jean, discovering the treachery of his son-in-law, offered him 100,000 gold florins to change his allegiance once more—not a very recommendable method for the making of alliances, but one “to which Jean submitted from necessity, and Charles from habit.”¹

But whatever motive drove father and son-in-law to a reconciliation, the effect upon King Edward’s raid, dependent for success upon the support of Charles of Navarre, was disastrous. Nevertheless he undertook to ravage and despoil the country to the best of his ability with the limited means at hand, and advanced as far as Saint Omer, where King Jean came to face him. At the meeting of the two armies King Jean, according to certain chroniclers, “pryvyly fled away”;² while, according to others, it was King Edward himself who beat a prudent retreat, being hotly pursued as far as Sangatte by Jacques de Bourbon. But these slight discrepancies in history need not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that King Edward returned home after a raid of barely a week’s duration, either because of the trouble King Jean promised to give him in France, or because of the trouble the Scots were already giving him in England, which demanded his attention.

While King Edward was, willingly or unwillingly, removing himself and his army from northern France, his son prepared his own expedition in the south, for his Gascons were hot with impatience for plunder, and his English probably equally so. He himself was anxious to do as much mischief as possible to King Jean, and thus satisfy his father’s itching ambition, his men’s itching palms, and his own itching sword-hand. He had been on a plundering raid before with his father, and he was determined now to go on one of his own; for since the breakdown of the plan

¹ Hume.

² Capgrave.

for a concerted action against France, this campaign of his could be called by no other name.

Early in the morning of the 5th of October, the Prince and his army of some 14,000 men set out from Bordeaux, and after a march of six days came, at Arouille, to the borders of enemy country.¹ There the Prince arranged the order of march, dividing his army into three hosts. The first he placed under the leadership of his Marshal, the Earl of Warwick, Reginald Cobham, and Lord Hampton, Senechal, with Roger Clifford, the Earl of Somerset, and the Gascon lords, the Captal de Buch, the Seigneur de Caumont, the Seigneur de Montferrant, in support. The Prince himself commanded the main body, with the Earl of Oxford, John de l'Isle, Maurice Berkeley, Willoughby d'Eresby, Chandos, de la Ware, the Sire d'Albret, and his particular friend Bartholomew Burghersh. The rear-guard was led by the Earls of Salisbury and Suffolk, with Edward le Despenser, Basset of Drayton, and the Seigneur de Pommier, who had charge of the Béarnais contingent.

There, before Arouille, the banners of Saint George were unfurled to show that hostilities were opened, and free licence to loot and plunder at will given to the whole army; with the result that by the following morning, Arouille was no more than a smoking heap of ruins.

On the next day, the 13th of October, they took Montclar, and the soldiery were so prompt about the business of burning the town that the Prince himself was nearly roasted in his bed, so that from that time on he slept under his tent, at a prudent distance from the pranks of his men.

As they had done in Normandy, the invaders swept through the Languedoc like a raging forest fire, leaving neither stick nor stone intact behind them, and they met with little resistance; "For you must know that this was before one of the fat countries of the world, the people good and simple, who did not know what war was, and no

¹ See map, page 19.

war had been waged against them until the Prince of Wales came. The English and Gascons found the country full and gay, the rooms furnished with carpets and draperies, the caskets and chests full of rich jewels. But nothing was safe from these robbers. They, especially the Gascons, who are very covetous, carried off everything."¹

And not only the houses and their furnishings suffered, but their occupants as well. Men, women, and children were put to the sword, which, as the good Froissart mildly remarks, "was a pity."

But Prince Edward did not see these "good and simple" people as human beings made in the same image as himself; to him they were so much live stock, the more or less valuable property of King Jean, and as such to be exterminated to the detriment of that Prince. It is doubtful if he took any real pleasure in the infliction of suffering; he was probably as guiltless of actual cruelty as the man who sets a torch to a wheatfield, to avenge himself upon its owner. Possibly, in all honesty, it never came to his mind that men of humble birth had any rights superior to that of the growing wheat, whose privilege in life is to feed its owner, whose fate is to be trampled under foot if occasion arose.

So the ravaging, destroying fire swept on, Nogaro and Plaisance went up in flames, the strong château of Galiac was stormed and burned. Bassoues alone was spared, out of respect for a prince of the Church, the Archbishop of Auch, who resided there. From Seisson on the banks of the Cedon to Simorre on the Gimone, all was laid waste, burned, devastated, plundered. Villefranche and Tournon were looted of their plentiful stocks of food-stuffs, but the populations escaped, having had the good sense to take themselves elsewhere in time.

On Tuesday, 26th of October, they crossed the Rivers Garonne and Ariège, which was an exploit never before

¹ Froissart

accomplished by cavalry, which so filled with terror the inhabitants of the region, who thought themselves in safety behind the barrier of their rivers, that they fled in all directions like chickens before a swooping hawk, leaving their belongings for the taking. The night was spent at La Croix Falgarde, seven miles from the great town of Toulouse, for it was Prince Edward's rule never to camp within striking distance of a fortified town. On the next day they approached that strong place, but seeing that "if they attacked them, the Toulousians would defend themselves, they passed peacefully beyond, without saying anything."¹

And Prince Edward had reason to congratulate himself for his speechlessness before Toulouse, since at Montgiscard two "explorateurs," or spies, were taken, who told him that the Count of Armagnac was in the city, hoping against hope to be attacked there; for Jacques de Bourbon was but four leagues distant, awaiting just such a move on the part of the English, in order to throw himself on their backs while they were busy with the city, and so take them between two fires.

If the two French captains had failed to stop the Prince on his triumphal course, Armagnac had at least saved Toulouse from his hands. Yet the inhabitants of that town had but little gratitude for their captain, since his stern rule interfered with the exercise of their "gay science," their courts of love, and their contests of troubadours. For he had not only torn down 3000 houses that seemed to him to be too near the walls for safety, but he had forbidden all jousts and such-like amusements, and had taxed each hearth for the maintenance of an armed man. Nevertheless, that sweet singer, Guillaume Molinier, judged that particular moment propitious for the publishing of his exquisite *Leys d'Amour*, an event that doubtless caused more stir within the walls of Toulouse than the

¹ Froissart

appearance of the English before them. But admirable though his work may have been, it was probably less efficacious for the saving of the town than the unpopular labours of Armagnac had been.

Having abandoned the forbidding Armagnac to his fortifications and his unpopularity, the Prince burned Montgiscard and the twelve windmills that were in the neighbourhood, being apparently indifferent to the fact that no windmills meant no bread for the already homeless inhabitants that winter, for at Avignonet he burned twenty more.

At Castelnaudry the Church of Saint Michel and the Convents of the Frères Mineurs and of the Carmelites of Notre Dame suffered the fate of the windmills—so that spiritual bread was to be lacking, too, that winter, it would seem. On the 1st of November a halt was called in order that all might rest and refresh themselves before tackling the large mouthful that would be Carcassonne. But some few of those hardy men were as yet not weary with well-doing, for they improved the shining hour by making a small expedition on their own account, attacking Pexiora, where the terrified citizens bought them off with 10,000 gold florins.

And now, on the 3rd of November, came the turn of that rich city, Carcassonne, "that was greater than London."¹ The citadel was reputed impregnable, but the town was open. The good burghers, innocent though they were of all knowledge of the art of war, were not lacking in courage. They stretched chains across their street, thinking, in the simplicity of their hearts, to keep out the invader by such means as that; and standing behind their defences, they defied the enemy. Whereat the English and Gascon knights laughed, leaped their horses over the chains, and poured into the town; while the burghers, after a gallant but hopeless attempt at

resistance, took refuge in the citadel that towered above them, such of them as were agile enough to reach it in time.

Now Carcassonne was one of the fairest towns of all Languedoc, and its inhabitants were loath to see it delivered to the flames before their very eyes. So, from the safety of the citadel, they opened negotiations with the Prince, offering him 250,000 écus if he would but go his way and leave them in peace. Such means to easy wealth might be very well for a common soldier, but the proud heart of Prince Edward revolted at the idea; his "chivalry" demanded that men pay for what they wanted in blood rather than in gold, or else go without. So he answered the burghers haughtily, saying, "I am not come as far as this to seek gold, but to prove the justice of my cause. I conquer towns, but I do not buy them."

The burghers may have been somewhat puzzled to know how the ends of justice were to be served by the unjust destruction of all they possessed in the world; but then they did not understand, these gentle folk of the Languedoc, this strange, hard chivalry that rode in the service of pride, their own being limited to the courtly service of a white-handed lady, or even of some dream-figment of their own. No, they did not understand; but what they did understand was, that after five days of enthusiastic looting, the English and Gascons set the torch to their fair city, and their ancient homes went up in the acrid smoke of wanton destruction.

Having looked with longing eyes at the great citadel of Carcassonne, that royal birthday-gift of Saint Louis to his lady mother that lay safe behind its towering defences, Prince Edward shook the ashes of the town from his feet and passed on.

Leaving Carcassonne on the 6th of November, the army marched past Trèbes, leaving it intact; which, to Bernard, Sire d'Albret, seemed to be a useless act of carelessness.

So, taking with him a few spears, he determined to remedy the oversight on his own account. The town had been deserted at the approach of the invaders, so that d'Albret and his men wandered at will through the streets, looting without let or hindrance.

D'Albret himself pushed open the door of a certain house with his steel-clad shoulder, and striding into it, was made aware that, after all, the town was not as completely deserted as he had thought ; for there, lying on a bed in the room before him, was a woman. One glance was enough to tell why she had not fled with the rest of her household, for she was so near her delivery that such an exertion would have been impossible to her. The unhappy creature uttered a scream of terror, and indeed d'Albret in his clanging armour, naked sword in fist and visor raised over fierce Gascon visage, made a none-too-reassuring spectacle. Nature, too, evidently took alarm, and there were unmistakable signs that she intended to make an effort to accomplish her business of giving life before death, in the shape of d'Albret, could interfere.

Now d'Albret, being a Gascon, had been familiar since childhood with the blunt facts of life and death, and was able to face the one without embarrassment and the other without fear. So, clanking and clanging with every movement, but not in the least abashed, he bent over the woman, and with hands as gentle now as they had been brutal a moment before, did what he could to help a new soul into the world, he who had already savagely hurled so many out of it.

The poor woman, however, would seem to have had but little confidence in her unusual midwife, which was perhaps not surprising. As soon as her tomato-red atom of a son was laid in her arms she clutched it to her, imploring the Gascon captain that, if indeed he must kill it, then at least he have it baptized first. D'Albret may have sighed at that, for the day was passing, and he was

sorely behind-hand with his looting. Nevertheless he obediently lifted up the squalling infant, wrapped it in a sheet, and made his way with it to the church. To find a priest was another matter; but at length he unearthed one, and dragged his holy but unwilling captive to the sacred edifice. There the good man performed his office, trembling alike of voice and of knee, while d'Albret waited patiently with his unaccustomed burden in his arms. And he did more than hold the infant; he stood godfather to it, giving it his own name of Bernard, and then carried it carefully, if a thought awkwardly, back to its anxious mother. To her he declared that, for love of his new godson, he would spare the town of Trèbes.

It is doubtful if the good Gascon told his royal leader of how he had spent that afternoon, nor what was the nature of the loot he had taken, for Prince Edward would not only have been coldly disdainful but contemptuously amazed; for why fling men out of the world with one hand and then help them into it with the other? But when the time came for d'Albret's sins and virtues to be weighed in the balance of divine justice, it may be that that small naked babe saved outweighed many a steel-clad fighting man slain.

Leaving Trèbes with its increased population, the invaders pushed on towards Narbonne, reaching it late in the evening after a harrassing march over arid mountain country. Contrary to his custom, the Prince lay that night in the town, and must have had but little sleep; for the burghers, who had taken refuge in their citadel on the other side of the river Aude, doubtless thinking that if their homes must be destroyed they might as well do it themselves, employed the night hours in bombarding the town with ballistas from the high walls of their refuge, killing and wounding not a few of their unwanted guests.

After a useful day spent in burning the town, the army moved on, crossing the Aude by the sumptuous marble

and stone bridges that spanned it. But the burghers and the garrison of the citadel had not yet had their last say, and while the troops were engaged on the bridges, they rushed out and seized two of Prince Edward's baggage-waggons "to the great loss of that prince"¹ and their own equally great profit.

The invaders had reached the sea now, and reached it without meeting any serious obstacle to their triumphant, if bloody, progress. But here news was brought to the Prince that the Count of Armagnac and Jacques de Bourbon, with 30,000 men, were at his heels. He entered into a "trembling rage"² at the mention of Armagnac's name, but he nevertheless turned about and started on the homeward march; and a painful and harrassed march it was in its beginnings. The army was without food for its horses, or water for itself. That night the rations were cooked in wine, wine was given to the horses to drink, with ludicrous results—and unhappy too, for many of the poor beasts died of this, their first step along the road of debauchery.

Despite the tauntings of Jacques de Bourbon, who should have known better, having been at Crécy, Armagnac contented himself with harrying and harrassing the invaders, and giving them as energetic a "God-speed" on their way home as he could. His army was greater than that of the enemy, but it was made up of men of the Languedoc, untrained, and in any case handier with the lute and the pen than with the sword. Gaston de Foix could have given him good fighting men, but Foix, while he had in appearance at least resigned himself to the continued existence of Armagnac, could not bring himself to lend him any active support. So the Lieutenant-General of Languedoc, though the Prince offered him pitched battle, refused to risk another disaster of Crécy. Once assured that the English were definitely on the retreat, he took

¹ The Brevier.

² Santi.

himself back to Toulouse, secure in the knowledge that he had acted wisely, and indifferent alike to the tauntings of the fiery Jacques de Bourbon and the cries of distress that arose from the towns that lay helpless as sheep staked out as bait for a tiger, in the road of that retreat.

Although they retired now, the invaders did not for all that stampede like rabbits. They went as they had come, steadily, ruthlessly, wiping the country as clean as a slate in their passing. Fanjeux, Villasavary, Lasserre they took and burned, and many windmills. Belpesch they took by assault, but did it no harm, since it belonged to the Count of Foix, and Foix had perhaps not as yet said his last word with his letter of the three figs of Bordeaux.

Then, on the 17th of November, they crossed the Lers and were on the actual lands of Gaston de Foix. Here the Prince behaved with circumspection, or Chandos did so for him, for he caused his banners to be furled and his spears lowered. And while he invaded the territory without leave, he declared it to be "terra pacis"; for a dressing of consideration on the young Count's wounded pride might yet heal him of his loyalty to the crown of France.

Gaston met the English Prince at Boulbonne, and since, for all he was twenty-four years of age, he was still "damoiseau," not having as yet received his knightly spurs—another matter for grievance, doubtless—he went on foot beside his guest's horse, modestly holding the stirrup-leather. Walking thus, and raising his beautiful face to the proud one of Edward, he saw that at least this was no uncouth bear of a man such as Armagnac, nor one likely thoughtlessly to insult his sensitive pride, as had King Jean. Something moved in his lonely, arrogant young heart at the sight of this royal prince, who, while his rank was so far above his own in birth and chivalry, was yet a young man of his own age and as hot as himself for the "honneur du blazon." So, for the first time, he

unbosomed himself and showed his hurt to other eyes than his own.

Prince Edward could do little to heal it save listen with sympathy and swear that King Jean was a shameless usurper of the royal dignity and unworthy of the loyalty or the services of such as the Count of Foix. Gaston lowered his graceful head and said nothing—but his grip tightened on the Prince's stirrup.

Prince Edward could do little for him; he could not wipe out the insult of the prison nor the injury of the presence of Armagnac; but he could lift from him the shame of his title of "damoiseau," he could endow him with the golden spurs of knighthood; and that gift was perhaps a greater thing to the young Count than the Lieutenancy of Languedoc.

As a full-fledged knight, Foix was privileged to go a-horseback beside the Prince, now his royal "godfather-in-chivalry"; and a-horseback he went with him to the limits of his territory. There, as though to celebrate the occasion with fire, Miremont and Cintagabelle were burned. Gaston took no hand in the burning, but from his border he watched it without protest. The three firs of Bordeaux had been forgotten and forgiven.

Leaving Gaston de Foix to his conscience, Armagnac to his bleak common-sense, and Bourbon to his virulent railings, Prince Edward made his way home. On the 28th of November he reached Mezin, an English town, and on that day the banners were furled for the last time, and the campaign had come to an end.

The terrible raid had lasted two months, and after it was over, the smiling face of Languedoc was twisted into a distorted mask of agony. Five hundred towns and villages had been destroyed, and so thoroughly destroyed that their inhabitants could not even identify the smoking ruins of their own homes amid the piled-up wreckage

Much loot had been taken, though no territorial acquisitions made ; but King Jean had been sorely impoverished, both in money and in men. So great was the destruction that an eye-witness of it was able to write to his crony in England : " Be assured of this, that since the war with the King of France began, there has nowhere else been wrought such havoc as during this raid. For the lands and towns which we have laid waste brought in the French king each year, for the prosecution of the war, more revenue than was furnished by half of his kingdom " ¹

The Gascons had seen their new Lieutenant at work, and they thoroughly approved of his methods. But after work should come play, and here the Prince did not live up to their expectations. It is true that great festivals took place in Bordeaux to welcome home the returning heroes, but few were granted the leisure to enjoy them. Prince Edward knew right well that, while he had taken a great many things out of the Languedoc, he had been forced to leave others behind him ; and those were the black-avised Armagnac and the bitter hatred and resentment of a previously light-hearted and careless people. Such a hatred as that might turn the simple folk of the province from their "gaye science," and lead them to embrace the grimmer science of Armagnac. So it behoved him to look well to his borders.

His captains, however great might be their legitimate desire to stay in Bordeaux and enjoy the fruits of their labours, were packed off willy-nilly to garrison the towns on the marches of Aquitaine. And they were not even suffered to rest there in peace, but were bidden lead expeditions into Guienne and win back such as they could of the towns and châteaux that King Jean, and King Philippe before him, had taken. Whereat they grumbled somewhat, for they were so glutted with loot that any undue exertion might bring about an indigestion ; more-

¹ Letter from John Wingfield to the Bishop of Winchester.

over, in the south of France, the game of war was considered to be a summer sport, while the dark winter days should be consecrated to love and minstrelsy. Nevertheless they went, for their new leader's undreamed-of capacity for plundering had impressed them, and they respected him for it. Nor did they shirk the new task given to them, for between the early days of December 1355 and the end of January of the next year they succeeded in taking twenty-two châteaux and closed towns, and by the end of May thirty more had been added to their game-bags.

Some unfortunates attempted to purchase their immunity from the over-zealous attentions of the guardians of the marches, among them the Count of Périgord. But to such as he the Prince replied, "The King of England, my father, is rich, and I can make use of his treasure at will. I am therefore in need of nothing. I will not, at the price of gold or silver, spare your town of Périgueux. I will accomplish that for which I am come: chastise, discipline, master by force of arms all the inhabitants of the duchy in rebellion against my father."

And he proceeded to do so to such an extent, even despoiling the vineyards that were the wealth of the country, that King Edward himself protested, for he feared to see the taste for English rule definitely destroyed amongst the sensitive-palated inhabitants of Aquitaine that he strove to conquer. And, indeed, it must already have had a somewhat bitter taste in their mouths. But the King's aim, the materialistic one of consolidating and enlarging his conquests in the duchy, was not identical with that of his son. The Prince's, to the contrary, was idealistic. As the inquisitor brings men to the acknowledgment of the one true God by torture, so he, by torture, would bring men to a recognition of their one true King, who was God's representative. And being so minded, he was as unbribable as any religious fanatic would have been.

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In the middle of 1356 Charles of Navarre again decided to change his allegiance, for he was not what might be termed a conservative man where treaties and loyalties were concerned. His first move was to encourage Normandy to rise against the tax of the "gabelle," instituted by King Jean in the previous year to meet the expenses of the war. His second, to lure the Dauphin Charles to Rouen, the capital of that young prince's duchy of Normandy, where he hoped to persuade him to open disobedience to his father. But King Jean, while he might not be a highly intelligent man, was at least a strong one. He went in person to Rouen to find his guilty son-in-law and his potentially guilty son. He came upon them dining together, and caused Charles of Navarre to be arrested there and then, saying sternly that he would suffer no other master in France than himself, and sent him packing off to prison. Whereat the brother of the royal culprit, Philippe de Navarre, raised a great outcry, and appealed to King Edward to avenge the hideous injustice that had been done the head of his house.

King Edward lent a complacent ear to the young man's clamour, and once more a concerted action against France with the aid of Navarre was decided upon. This time Lancaster was to land in the north and march southward, while the Black Prince should take the road for the north and make a junction with him in Normandy, thus cutting off the peninsula of Brittany, which could then be subdued at leisure.

Lancaster sailed from Southampton on the 18th of June, carrying with him the young Breton Count, Montfort, now old enough to take the place of his dead father as candidate for the coronet of Brittany. They landed at La Hogue, and marched to the relief of certain of the King of Navarre's towns, besieged by King Jean.

While Lancaster made good war in Normandy, the

Black Prince got ready to push north to meet him. This would be no holiday excursion into a helpless province, but a grim drive into the living heart of France itself. Plunder and destruction would not be its aim—though these would not be neglected—it would be a definite move in the grim chess of warfare, and an attempt to checkmate the King of France himself.

In the first days of July 1356 all was in readiness for the great adventure. Some 8000 picked men were assembled, of which even the 2000 archers were to go mounted for greater mobility. All the great seigneurs and barons of Gascony were of the party, the Earls of Warwick, Suffolk, Oxford, and Salisbury, Lords Willoughby and Basset, Audley, de la Ware, Cobham, Bartholomew Burghersh, Sir Maurice Berkeley, and the pick of the professional soldiers, Sir John Chandos, Sir Nigel Loring, Sir William Felton. Of the Gascons, who made up about half of the contingent, there were the Seigneurs de Pommier, Lesparre, the Sires de Montferrant and Mussidon, and the Capital de Buch. There was also a detachment of mercenaries from the Netherlands, led by a Frenchman, Denis de Morbeque, a fugitive from French justice over some affair of manslaughter at Saint Omer.

On the 6th of July the small but compact and strong little army took the road for the north. At first they marched due east until they came to Bergerac, where they crossed the Dordogne. Then they turned north, reaching Brantôme on the 9th of August, and Bellac on the 16th.¹

Though this was no simple raid of pillage, pillage was by no means overlooked. No garrison town was attacked, but the countryside was laid waste and desolate. The soldiery lived off the land, as was the custom for both friend and foe in those days; but they did not content themselves with merely supplying their wants as they went, for "when they dislodged, they would strike out

¹ See map, page 19.

the heads of the wine-vessels, and burne the wheat, oates, and bærlic, and all other things which they could not take with them." ¹

At Bellac the Prince struck obliquely eastwards, going by way of Saint Benoît du Sault, Argentin, and Chateauroux to Bourg Dieu, whose suburbs were burned and sacked. Then ever eastwards to Issoudun, which he attacked fruitlessly for two days. Nevertheless, although he could not take the place, he overran the countryside, laying it waste as far east as Bourges, where his assault again failed, though he burned the suburbs.

On the 25th of August he turned eastwards and crossed the Cher, took Vierzon, and lay there that night. In that locality he was spared the trouble of destroying the countryside, for the work had been done for him three days before by his vanguard—even Aubigny, twenty-five miles distant, having been sacked.

So far, the little army had met with little resistance, but King Jean was not idle for all that. He was collecting a tremendous host at Chartres, and in the meantime sent an advance guard into the country to garrison such places as seemed to be in immediate danger, and a small body of men-at-arms, under Boucicault and the Sire de Craon, to discover the position of the English.

Hearing this, the Prince realised that if he would make his junction with Lancaster he must do so with speed, for he was ignorant of the fact that the Duke had already been forced back at the Pont-de-Cé by King Jean. Now prisoners are at the best of times a hindrance, and to an army in a hurry they may even spell disaster; so he caused those he had taken at Vierzon to be put to death, save only a few whose wealth permitted their persons to be classed among the loot. Having thus lightened his baggage, he hurried on, pushing ever west, in the hopes of crossing the Loire and meeting Lancaster.

¹ Holinshed.

Not far from Vierzon the advance guard fell in with Boucicault and the Sire de Craon. During the ensuing exchange of courtesies the English lost some men taken prisoner, and finding themselves worsted, fell back on the main army. The Prince at once sent a strong detachment in search of the enemy, and this time it was the French who took to their heels, losing the prisoners they had previously taken, and making off in the direction of the fortified town of Romorantin. When the Prince heard that Craon and Boucicault had taken refuge in that town, "Let us go there," he said, "for I should like to see them a little nearer." So, despite his hurry and the fact that Romorantin was a strongly fortified place, he went and sat before it.

In person he inspected the place, and then sent Chandos to summon it to surrender. On receiving a refusal, he opened the assault. On the 31st of August he began his operations, and on the 3rd of September the town still held out. Then, one of his favourite esquires having been killed by a stone thrown from its walls, he swore his most solemn oath, by the soul of his father, that he would not leave it untaken. Finally, after two more days spent in fierce assault, he managed to set fire to the roof of the citadel by means of Greek fire, and the garrison was forced to surrender or roast. So, at a cost of five days lost, he reduced the only fortified place he attempted on that campaign, and so avenged his esquire. Then, taking Boucicault with him—for Boucicault was too great a man to be offered up as a sacrifice to even the most beloved of esquires—he hurried on his way.

And he hurried in very truth now, for the rumour of King Jean's tremendous coming was heavy on the winds from the north. Skirting along the banks of the Loire he went, as his father ten years before had skirted those of the Somme, seeking for a crossing; and like his father, he found none, for the bridges were down, and there was no ford of the Blanche Tache here to save him.

On the 5th of September he lay at Montlouis, opposite Tours ; and on the 9th, King Jean crossed the Loire at Amboise.

The Prince, wishing for a last word before he definitely turned to retreat before the French host, sent a party to burn Tours. But the burghers of that town were wiser than those of Carcassonne had been. They stretched no chains across their streets, but instead plumped down on their knees and implored their patron saints, Martin and Gatien, to save them. This the two holy gentlemen very obligingly did, sending a terrific downpour of rain which very effectively put out the fires lit by the Prince, who had perhaps neglected to call on the superior powers of Saint George. In any case, although three times the town was fired, three times the heavens opened and saved it.

Having been thus vanquished by his saintly adversaries, the Prince turned definitely south ; for though it was said that he had even seen troops of Philippe de Navarre on the far side of the Loire, there was no way for him to cross and join them. He was cut off from his allies, and King Jean was coming with all the thunder of his 60,000 men behind him. And now again, as ten years before, began the desperate dash for safety. Once more, as his father had done before him, he ran like an over-frail ship before the great storm that was coming down upon him out of the north, expecting every moment to be engulfed by its mighty power. But soon it became apparent that even the hot-headed Jean had gained some little scrap of wisdom from Crécy, for instead of pelting after his enemy like hounds after a fox as Philippe had done, he rode parallel, striving to outstrip his quarry, cut him off from his earth, throw him back upon the Loire, and there tear him to pieces at leisure.

From the 11th of September to the 16th, the wild race went on. Prince Edward was hampered by the great train of waggons laden with plunder that he had with

him; but for all his desperate haste, neither the avarice of his men nor his own pride would allow him to drop the precious ballast that impeded his going, nor to give such a proof of his desperate plight to his adversary. Past Montbazou, Sainte Marie, La Haie, Châtellerault, the desperate chase went on, the two armies moving cheek by jowl, separated only by a few scant miles of territory.

After leaving Châtellerault, the Prince turned obliquely eastwards towards Chauvigny, hoping against hope to slip by the French between that town and Poitiers; and he rode as never before for this last, slender hope of salvation. But his hopes were dashed, for that afternoon his vanguard came into sudden collision with the French rear, under the Counts of Auxerre and Joigny, and the Marshal of Burgundy. The French gave enthusiastic chase, pursuing the English with such hot-headed excitement that they flung themselves full upon the main body of the English before they so much as saw it. The two Counts and the Marshal were taken, but even such rich booty as that could not blind Prince Edward's eyes to the truth—the game was up, King Jean had outridden him, and his line of retreat was cut.

He spent that night—the 17th of September—in a wood near La Chaboterie, and on the following morning set off to try to reach Poitiers. But he soon learned that the French lay between him and that town, so there would seem to be nothing for it but to fight, pit his 8000 men against the 60,000 of the French, unless he could still find a way out of the trap.

He took up his position on a little hill, where stood a farm called Maupertuis,¹ some seven miles from Poitiers. To the right of it ran the old Roman road, and on the left, the little river Miausson. He lay there that night, occupying the top of the hill, with his waggons parked under its slope on his right flank.

¹ Now called La Cardmerie.

On the next morning, there came to him from the French host a cardinal, Hélié Talleyrand de Périgord, who had obtained leave from King Jean to try to arrange the matter without bloodshed. The good man came before the Prince "and saluted him full sweetly, weeping for pity."¹

"Sire," he said, "for God's mercy now have pity on so many a noble person who this day might perish in this conflict, so that you may not be in the wrong. If you could be brought to accord, God and the Holy Trinity would be gracious to you."

The Prince agreed, for of a certainty God would be more gracious to him than ever King Jean would be. He was willing to make terms, and generous terms. He would, he said, give up all the towns and châteaux he had conquered, set free his prisoners, swear not to serve for seven years against the King of France, and as a make-weight he would give 100,000 francs to the King, to pay him for his trouble.

The Cardinal made his way back to King Jean, his tears probably dried by this munificent offer. But they soon had occasion to break out afresh, for the French king declared stubbornly that he would accept no lesser gage of peace than the person of the Prince himself. Once more the holy man crossed the distance between the two armies, sweltering in his crimson robes under the fierce September sun, his sweat mingling freely with his tears.

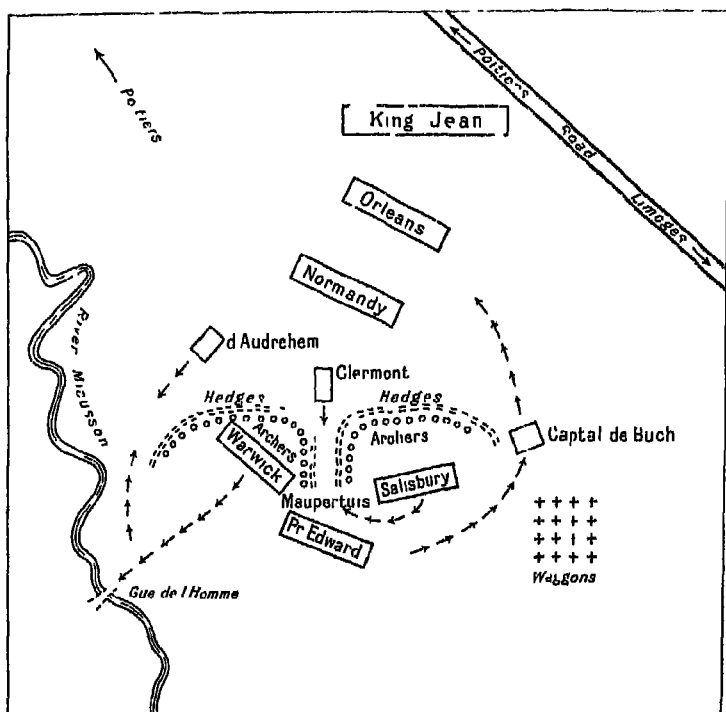
When the Prince heard the ultimatum of King Jean, he raised his head proudly, and made as noble an answer as a man facing death could do. "England shall never pay ransom of mine," he said shortly, for he knew what was likely to be the ransom required for him—Calais. Now King Edward had many sons, while he had but one Calais. Wherefore this, his eldest son, reckoning that his own death would be a lesser evil than the loss of Calais, prepared

¹ Chandon de Harild

to accept it unhesitatingly for the greater glory of the house of Plantagenet.

All that long Sunday of September during which the Cardinal, sore of foot and sorer of heart, had striven to bring peace between the two hosts, Prince Edward had not wasted his time; and when the sun went down he had done all that could be done for the safeguarding of his little army. The low hill he occupied was surrounded by hedges and ditches, and covered with vines and bushes. He deepened the ditches, bound the hedges together to make a breastwork behind them, leaving only one narrow passage through it by which an attack could try to force his lines. This passage led up to the top of the hill, and was bordered on either side by high, thick hedges. Behind these hedges, so that they would be hidden from view, he placed the majority of his archers. He divided the rest of his host into the usual three battles. The van was led by Oxford and Warwick, but was largely made up of Gascons; the Seigneurs d'Albret, de Montferrant, de Mussidon, de Pommier, de Lesparre, and the Captal de Buch. The rear was given to the Earls of Salisbury and Suffolk, with Lords Willoughby and Basset, Sir Maurice Berkeley, and the mercenaries from the Netherlands, under Denis de Morbeque. The centre the Prince commanded in person, and with him were Cobham, de la Ware, Edward le Despenser, Audley, Sir William Felton, Sir Nigel Loring, his great friend Bartholomew Burghersh, and his councillor, the good Sir John Chandos. Then, after having protected the rear of his position with palisades and waggons, he felt that he had done all that could be done for that day, and settled down to pass the night.

When day broke, the English saw before them the immense, glittering sea of men that was the host of King Jean. In three great waves it lay, obliquely to the hill. The first battle raised the banners of the King's sons—Duke Charles of Normandy, the Dauphin; Jean, Count of



BATTLL OF POITIERS

Poitiers ; and Louis, Count of Anjou.¹ Behind that came the battle of the Duke of Orleans, brother of the King—and there, farther off still, a streak of silver across the horizon, the host of the King himself, over which the brilliant splash of colour that was the great oriflamme of France, spread its heavy silken folds.

Among the English there was no movement, no tumult—for each man knew what duty was assigned to him, where lay his post of honour. But in the French lines it was otherwise. When they saw how the English had profited by the time granted for the peace negotiations, there was great indignation, and men cried out that the Cardinal had betrayed them. But that was not the case ; for the good man, who had taken his weary feet and his tears to Poitiers, was most genuinely afflicted by his failure to avoid bloodshed ; and had he not sworn to the Pope that he would bring about peace or the very flint-stones themselves should cry out ? He had failed in his mission, for he had “ neither thanks nor favour from either side,”² and the flint-stones lay silent upon the field.

Having thus expressed their feeling regarding Cardinal de Talleyrand, who had caused them to lose a day and given the English time to fortify themselves, the French captains met in council.

King Jean was of the opinion that his men should fight on foot, as he realised that in the great battles which the English had won in France, they had always fought in that fashion. But what he did not realise was that they had always fought on the defensive, when horses were more of a hindrance than a help ; nor did he realise that his steel-clad men-at-arms would have to march for more than a mile under the crushing weight of their armour and the fierce rays of the sun, over rough ground, before they

¹ Later Charles V., the Duke of Berri, and the Duke of Anjou respectively.

² Chénier's Herald

could engage. All he knew was that the victorious English of Crécy had fought on foot, and that therefore that method of warfare must be the wisest, no matter what the conditions of it might be. So, with the exception of two detachments of six hundred horse, under Marshals de Clermont and d'Audrehem, who were to clear the road for their clumsy infantry, all that great host set foot to ground and shortened their twelve-foot spears to the more wieldy length of six feet.

D'Audrehem, who had been starved out of Calais, was of the opinion that it might not be amiss to starve the English out of Maupertuis; for they were already short of food, and the French could have sat about the hill and had their way with them at a cost of no more than a little patience. But such an intelligent, if undramatic plan was held by the other captains to be totally lacking in chivalry and opportunity for "*apertises d'armes*," and so was rejected—perhaps to the secret satisfaction of d'Audrehem himself, for he was not naturally of an overly patient turn of mind.

While the deliberations were going on, Prince Edward looked out over that enormous mass of fighting men that was the French army, and thought that not even at Crécy had he seen so unpromising a sight; nor could he see how he could fail to be crushed like a frog beneath a steel-shod wheel when that great Juggernaut of war should come rolling forward. It lay there as yet unmoving, glittering and glinting in the sun; and seeing it motionless thus and making no roaring advance over the mile of country that separated the two armies, the Prince took thought; for "gladly would he have avoided the battle if he could have escaped from there."¹ Since the French remained inactive, it seemed to him that perhaps, even at this eleventh hour, he might indeed "escape from there," for his enemies did nothing to prevent him.

In haste he sent Warwick to take the waggons over the

¹ Chandos Herald.

river Miausson, at the Gué de l'Homme, while he himself prepared to follow, once the baggage—that precious baggage—was in safety. And he might even have succeeded, for Warwick's movements were hidden from the French by the hedges about the hill. Warwick and his men were hidden, yes; but the tops of their spears, with their fluttering pennons, were visible, and d'Audrehem saw them slipping by. Then he, who had been so prudent but a moment ago, raised himself upright in his stirrups in his excitement, and cried aloud, "Forward! Forward! or they will escape us!"

The Marshal of Clermont protested, saying that there was nothing to fear; the English would hold their ground. Whereupon d'Audrehem, white with fury and impatience, turned angrily to him, shouting, "The sight of the English mislikes you, it would seem, Marshal de Clermont!"

Patience under such an insult was more than could be asked of a Marshal of France; and retorting, "The nose of your horse shall never pass the tail of mine this day, d'Audrehem," he drove home his spurs and charged, followed by d'Audrehem, and leaving the dismounted men-at-arms to toil after him as best they could.

Warwick was already half-way across the Miausson, the Prince himself was in movement, and Salisbury alone was in position to meet the impetuous charge. Hastily he flung his men into the opening of the narrow way that led up from the foot of the hill, and sent his archers to take their places behind the hedges on either side of it. Clermont came charging recklessly up that seemingly innocent path, while d'Audrehem flung himself against Warwick, with the intention of preventing him crossing the river. At first his charge came on like a whirlwind, but then Warwick spread out his archers along the banks of the river, and took the Frenchmen on the flank. Ordering them to aim at the fore-quarters of the horses, Warwick gave the signal, and the arrows leapt forward, hissing like angry snakes.

Scarce one of those three hundred picked horsemen but went down before that murderous flight of shafts.

Warwick then turned back to the support of Salisbury, leaving the waggons to take care of themselves, while the Prince took up his previous position on the crest of the hill, ordering his men to dismount. Clermont, meanwhile, had come thundering through the narrow gap in the hedge, and was pushing his way up the hill. He was wedged into that straight path as tightly as a finger into a glove, his men scarcely able to move their weapons in the press. When he was well engaged in the steep, narrow way, the archers hidden behind the hedges on either side let loose their shafts. They had no need to aim, for their targets were almost within arm's reach, and were large enough, in all conscience.

Horses screamed and reared under the deadly sting of the arrows, men spurred and cursed, seeking for room to use their great, unwieldy spears, and not finding it. Wedged there in the narrow pass, so crushed that the wounded horses had scarce room to fall, the mass of men struggled and heaved, each seeking space to use his weapons against this enemy that he could not see, and each hampered and impeded by his fellows. At length the horses, wiser than their masters, saw the hopeless folly of their effort, and decided that they had had enough. Down the hill they had so painfully climbed they came hurtling, a living avalanche of men and beasts.

Below them was the battle of the Dauphin which, panting and sweating, had followed their cavalry on foot, and now waited, already exhausted, to attempt to scale the hill when the horsemen should have cleared the way. Into this compact mass of men on foot, Clermont's cavalry came smashing like a mailed fist into a game of nine-pins. The thing could not have been better managed for the English had Prince Edward himself given the Marshal orders to charge his fellow-countrymen.

The battle of the Dauphin gave before that tremendous shock, and at first fell back in disorder. But it rallied at length and came on to the assault, attacking along the whole line of ditch and hedge at the foot of the hill. So hardy was the oncoming of those clumsy, steel-clad men on foot that the Prince began to think that they might well succeed in forcing their way up the hill, and sweep him off it. So he sent in his own troops to support Warwick and Salisbury, keeping by him only his immediate household of 400 spears. The Dauphin's battle struggled sturdily against the withy-bound hedge, striving to penetrate it and come at the archers behind, who volleyed out death and destruction at them from its protection. But the barrier was too strong for the assailants, and at length, slowly, reluctantly, they began to give back. It was high time, too, for the archers had exhausted their arrows, and were reduced to hurling great fragments of flint, with which the hillside was littered, upon their aggressors. The huge stones fell with a clash and a clamour upon the steel-clad Frenchmen, making such a ringing din as could be heard in Poitiers itself, seven miles distant. So that the good Cardinal, if he was lending an attentive ear at that moment, may have congratulated himself; for his promise to the Pope was fulfilled—the very flint-stones themselves were crying out.

The struggle had been long, bitter, bloody; but “the division of Normandy was discomfited that morning, and the Dauphin departed thence.”¹

King Jean, when he saw his heir's battle dispersed thus, became anxious. Like King Edward, he took his sons early into battle with him, blooding them before the taste of milk was well out of their mouths. But, unlike Edward, he had not thought to leave one at least in safety at home, in case evil should befall the others. He had brought his whole brood into the battle of Poitiers with him, and

¹ *Chronos Herald*.

now he began to tear not only for the life of his heir, but for the fate of his whole race. So he sent messengers, bidding them take the Dauphin out of the fight, and lodge him safely behind the walls of Poitiers.

The Dauphin went, as was reasonable enough; but what was not so reasonable was that his brothers of Poitiers and Anjou should go with him. But the young Princes went—or perhaps their guardians took them—and with them went their personal escorts of some 800 spears.

Seeing the banners of the Princes moving out of the fight, the battle of Orcans, which came on behind, wavered, thinking the day was already lost, and with scarce a blow delivered, they in their turn left the field.

The English had a breathing-space then before facing the most formidable host of the three, that of King Jean, still intact, and in itself far outnumbering the English and Gascons on the hilltop. The men-at-arms raised their vizors to cool their heated faces a little, while the archers went out to replenish their exhausted stock of arrows, tearing them by main force from the bodies of dead and wounded alike, and thrusting them, blood-smeared as they were, into their quivers.

Then the great host of King Jean came surging forward, as steady before the sight of the defection of their fellows as the men of Orleans had been unstable. Over it streamed the sacred oriflamme of France, and before it came King Jean, as brave a figure of a soldier as could be seen on that field, with his little twelve-year-old son Philippe¹ going as gallantly beside him.

Seeing that tremendous, earth-shaking approach, an English knight cried out that all was lost; whereat the Prince reproved him hotly, for nothing, he said, had as yet been lost, and a great deal gained. John Chandos also saw the great advance of foot-soldiers, tremendous in their numbers if you will, but with no support behind them now.

¹ Duke of Touraine, later Duke of Burgundy.

His reaction to the sight was otherwise, for he saw what possibilities lay in that massed advance of infantry. For the first time that day he lost his calmness of demeanour, and seizing the Prince's bridle-rein he cried, "Sire, ride forward! Ride forward to the charge, for God has delivered your enemy into your hands!"

King Jean's host fronted the enemy now, coming on steadily, despite the archers who wrought havoc with their front ranks, rending great gaps in them. But now with a huge clamour of trumpets and yells of "Saint George! Guenne!" the Prince and his mounted men came hurtling down upon them, tearing their way into the holes that the archers had wrought in their front ranks, and ramming and trampling a passage into the very heart of the great host. King Jean must have realised by now the folly of dismounting his men for an offensive action, but it was too late to mend matters. The English and Gascon horsemen cut through them like a ploughshare through rain-softened loam, rode them down, trampled them under foot.

Yet the King's men held their ground, striving to keep some semblance of formation, to fill in the yawning gaps the charging horses made in their ranks. But now another, a hammer-like shock of battle, struck them, paralysing in its swift unexpectedness. The Captal de Buch, that wily Gascon, had entered the fight in true Gascon fashion, impetuous but shrewd. With his detachment of heavy Gascon cavalry he had circled about the hill, out of sight of the French, and now hurled himself with all the weight of his horses and men upon the left flank of the enemy. Like the prow of a ship cutting shallow ice, he went through them, and like ice they shattered and broke up into fragments and little islands, and were swept away helpless on the stormy sea of the battle.

In small, isolated groups they fought now, and in groups they fell, drowned under the raging waves of

mounted men that swept over them. The great oriflamme of France tossed and rocked over that ocean of destruction like some mighty, bright-hued bird in its death-agony. Many were the eager hands stretched to take it, that rich prize, but Geoffroi de Charni who bore it carried it safe out of the storm, though he took his death-wound in the doing.

The Dauphin and the oriflamme were safe, but the King himself was in the heart of the battle, nor would he move from it, but stood there firm, his feet widespread, swinging his battle-axe as though, alone, he could yet change the fortunes of war. He was unhelmed now, that tall king, his ruddy hair flying in the wind like the flame of a torch, to serve as another oriflamme for those of his men who were still on their feet. In the midst of that vast ruin of his battle he stood firm, as a strong donjon-keep might stand alone above the wreckage of its château.

He was cut off now in the midst of his enemies, who rode about him in ever-narrowing circles. There were none left to answer his rallying-cry; none, save his little son, Philippe. To him, all that was left to him of his great host, he cried in proud encouragement, "Hardi! Philippe, hardi!" And the little lad struck out hardily indeed with his toy sword, trying to shield his royal father with his frail body, as fierce a little warrior as ever sprung from the royal house of France.

The sun had been low in the east when the great battle began, and it was westering now, standing knee-deep in a bloody twilight. King Jean was still upright on his two feet, but his enemies pushed him close, and there were none to answer his cry of "Montjoye! Saint Denis!" and cut a road to safety for him. His great host was slain, almost to a man; and "may God receive the souls! for the bodies abode on the field."¹

When it became apparent that the field was won, John Chandos once more laid his hand on his royal master's

¹ Chando Harold

bridle-rein, saying, "Sire, you would do well to stay here, and plant your banner above this bush, to rally your people. God be praised, the day is yours, for I can see no French banner nor pennon, and no troops in a fit state to rally. Rest yourself a little then, for you are over-heated." As soon as the Prince's banner was displayed, his knights came flocking towards it: they disarmed him, set up a little tent of crimson silk for him, and brought him drink.

As the two Marshals, Warwick and Suffolk, came up, he asked them if they had tidings of the King of France.

"No, Sir," they replied, "we know nothing certain of him; but we believe him to be slain or taken, for he did not quit the battle." Then the Prince bade Warwick and Cobham ride out over the field and try to discover the truth.

But even as they rode off to do his bidding, they saw at a little distance a mob of soldiery who fought and tussled over something in their midst, like hounds about a kill. At once the two noblemen spurred forward, and pushing their horses into the press, demanded to know what was afoot.

"It is the King of France who is taken," came the breathless answer.

King Jean had been in danger enough when he fought alone in the thick of the battle, but he was in a more bitter peril now. For about him surged a great mass of men, no longer hot with the blood-lust, but with that fiercer emotion, the lust for money. In their midst, in the persons of one tall man and one small child, they held such riches as not one of them had ever dreamed of in his wildest imaginings—the ransom of the Crown of France. So each fought savagely, struggling desperately to shoulder his neighbour aside and be first to lay hands on the royal prize, and each cried fiercely, "It is I who took him! It is I who took him!"

In the centre of that money-maddened horde King Jean stood upright, holding his little son to him, and

looking haughtily at this base-born rabble that dared to yap about him like unmannerly curs, soiling his royal person with their muddy paws. Helpless he was in their midst, but as proud as a caged falcon, staring with arrogant eyes at his tormentors. Presently he spoke, saying coldly, "Sirs, Sirs, take me courteously to the Prince my cousin. Never quarrel over my capture, for such a one as I can make all of you rich."

For a moment their clamour was quieted, but soon the mad struggle broke out again, so that the King, to save himself bodily injury and indignity, looked about him for some one worthy to receive his gauntlet—but only he saw the raving mob of frenzied men, who seemed as though they would rather see him torn limb from limb than delivered up intact to any one of their fellows. Then the King heard a voice that called out to him in "good French," saying, "Rendez-vous à moi, Sire! Rendez-vous à moi!"

"And who are you," said the King, "who speak to me thus in French?"

"Denis de Morbeque, Sire, a Frenchman of Saint Omer, banished these many years past from France, but of gentle blood."

To this man who spoke his own tongue and was of decent birth, outlaw though he might be, King Jean delivered up his gauntlet, and a great howl of disappointment and anger went up from the rest of the mob as he did so.¹

It was at this moment that Warwick and Cobham intervened, ordering the disgruntled crowd to stand back, as they valued their heads. This they obediently but reluctantly did, while the two Englishmen dismounted and bent the knee before the King, "who was right glad of their coming, for they delivered him from great danger."²

Then King Jean was led with all courtesy to Prince

¹ Denis de Morbeque subsequently sold his royal captive to Prince Edward for the sum of 2000 nobles, which has been computed at £666, 13s 4d.; a bargain!

² Froissart

Edward, who came forward eagerly to greet him. He knelt at his feet, and would have disarmed him with his own hands, but the King, who was perhaps in no mood for assaults of courtesy, would not suffer it, saying, "Fair cousin, for God's pity, let be!"

Then the Prince spoke to him modestly and generously, for though he could look upon the 11,000 dead of that day without flinching, the sight of the distress of this royal captive of his awoke all that was best, all that was most truly chivalrous in his heart.

"Sweet Sir," he said, "this is God's doing, and none of ours; and we are bound to give thanks to Him therefore, and beseech Him earnestly that He would grant us His glory, and pardon us this victory."

That night the Prince offered dinner to the noblest of his captives, which he was able to do lavishly, thanks to the abundance of provisions he had taken in the French camp.

King Jean and his son Philippe sat at the high table, and with them were Jacques de Bourbon, the Counts of Longueville and Eu, of Etampes, Tancarville, Joinville, Dammartin, and the Seigneur de Parthenay; while the lesser barons and knights were placed, each in his degree, at lower tables.

The Prince would in no wise consent to sit at meat with King Jean, but served him with his own hands, since, he said, he was not yet worthy to take his place at table with so great a king and so valiant a man as was Jean of France. Seeking to console his royal prisoner, he knelt once more at his feet, saying, "Dear Lord, be of good cheer, although God has not willed to accomplish your desire this day. Certainly my father will give you all honour and good friendship, and will come to so reasonable an accord with you, that you will remain good friends as long as you live. It seems to me that you have good cause to rejoice, although this affair has not turned in your favour, for

you have to-day conquered the highest renown for prowess, and have been judged the most valorous of your side."

It may be that King Jean was not entirely comforted by those words, avid of knightly honour though he was. For although he may have earned the title of hardest fighter of that day, he had also earned the distinction of sacrificing 11,000 of his subjects for the gaining of it. And it may be that even to him, praise of his personal exploits could not entirely counterbalance the knowledge of how much that was noblest and best in the land of France lay still unburied upon that field, in the sight of which he himself was bidden eat, drink, and be merry.

Out there in the night, beyond the reach of the torch-light, but within sound of the revelry, lay the bodies of the Duke of Bourbon ; of Gautier de Brienne, who was Duke of Athens and Constable of France ; there were the Marshals de Clermont and de Beaujeu ; there lay Geoffroi de Charni, the royal standard-bearer ; Robert de Durazzo, who was cousin of the King of Naples ; the Viscounts of Brosses and Rochechouart ; the Seigneurs de La Tour, de La Fayette, de Matas, de Pons, d'Humières, and de Landas. There was Eustache de Ribault, who had worn King Edward's chaplet of pearls so proudly before the ladies he loved to court, and there was Renaud, Bishop of Chalon. Eleven thousand lay on the field, of which nearly 2500 were men of gentle birth.

"On that day perished the flower of the chivalry of France." ¹

Prince Edward did not linger at Poitiers, but almost immediately resumed his homeward march. He had no need for haste now, since King Jean no longer thundered dangerously at his heels, but rode helpless at his side. Nor did that same need for haste demand an arbitrary reduction of the number of prisoners, as had been the case

¹ *Prigmore*

after the taking of Vieizon ; yet for all that, their very numbers—there were over 2000 of them—made them a dangerous addition to such a small host as this, for with the sight of their captive King ever before their eyes, they might conceive some desperate plot to deliver him. No, they would be safer free on parole than captive under guard. So the majority were freed at once, and left at liberty to go in search of their ransoms, only the most important among them being taken to Bordeaux with the King.

But even that small, hand-picked selection of prisoners made no mean showing, for it included Jacques de Bourbon, who had been taken by the Captal de Buch, and sold to Prince Edward for 23,000 écus ; the Counts of Dammartin, Saarbrucken, Eu, Tancarville, Sancerre, Vaudemont, Auxerre, Longueville, Ponthieu, Ventadour, Joigny, Vendôme ; the Marshal d'Audrehem, hero of Calais ; the Sires de Craon, de Derval, d'Aubigny ; and Guillaume, Archbishop of Sens. Such a haul of prisoners as had never before been seen in Christendom !

On the day after the battle the Prince lay at Les-Roches-Marie, where he gave himself and his men a well-earned day of rest. Then he pushed on south, going by way of Couhé-Verac and Ruffec, where he left the main road and crossed the Charante. By Mouton he went, and Rouche-foucault, and on the 30th of September he lay at Saint Emilion on the Dordogne. The 2nd of October saw his triumphal return to Bordeaux.

All that winter was spent in rejoicings of all kinds—feastings, joustings, revelries, dances. And by the time spring had come again, all the riches, all the mountains of loot that had been taken on the campaign had melted like snow under a warm southern sun, before the still warmer smiles of the ladies of Gascony.

In the spring of 1357, Prince Edward announced his

intention of returning to England, and taking his royal prisoner with him. Whereat the seigneurs of Gascony murmured; for had they not done their share in the winning of the battle of Poitiers, and were the chief spoils of the day to be taken from them thus? Moreover, their hearts stirred uneasily at the thought of the King of France going, a prisoner, into a foreign land. It was true that King Edward was their seigneur, but King Jean was their overlord for all that; and whether he sat rightly or wrongly on the throne of France, he had nevertheless been touched on the brow, the breast, and the shoulders with the holy oils of Saint Rémi, and that consecration in the ancient Cathedral of Rheims made of him something apart, made in some way a sacred halo about his person.

That he should be held prisoner had not disturbed them overmuch, for the presence of such a captive within the walls of their city had been a dainty sop to their Gascon vanity; but that he should be hailed overseas like any other exceptionally valuable piece of loot, disliked them. They made loud outcry about it—so loud that Prince Edward was constrained to silence them by stuffing their mouths with gold, which cost him as much as 100,000 crowns, for Gascons have large mouths when they complain.

Having thus settled matters with his subjects, he agreed to a two-years' peace with exhausted France—less because of the pleading of Pope Innocent VI. than because his own forces were too worn out to thrust home the dagger that Poitiers had laid against the heart of France. Then, late in June, he set sail from Bordeaux, and landed at Plymouth after a crossing of eleven days.

In great state the Prince set out to lead his captive, with all reverence and courtesy, to his father at London. By leisurely, slow stages he went, lest King Jean suspect him of an indecent haste to show his prize to the people of London; though, indeed, his heart was bursting with impatience for just that moment of supreme triumph.

Exerting all his knightly courtesy to restrain his wild urge for haste, he rode respectfully beside his captive, discoursing of this and that, of everything save prisoners, lost battles, and ransoms.

But near Canterbury all his efforts to spare the feelings of his captive were brought to naught ; for of a sudden the hedges at the side of the road were torn aside, and a horseman flung himself before them, laughing boisterously. The Prince's face suffused with shame ; for the rider who thrust himself thus rudely into their presence was no other than his father, King Edward himself, who had not been able, he, to restrain his boyish eagerness to behold this new and royal acquisition of his.

The Prince's face was dark, and he retired into the black shadows of his Angevin reserve, wishing bitterly that his father were anywhere but here, or at least that he would obey the most primitive dictates of chivalrous courtesy. But King Edward was all boisterous Norman for the moment, his face red with naïve pleasure, his whole person vibrant with delighted pride and triumph. At that moment he was like an exuberant small boy who has stolen downstairs to feast his childish eyes on his New Year's gifts before the appointed hour. He was quite unconscious of the disapproving eye of his solemn-faced son, as he explained gaily and transparently that he had just chanced to be a-hunting in the neighbourhood on that particular day—and would not his beloved cousin of France join him in the pleasures of the chase ?

King Jean was not unnaturally somewhat surprised at the sight of this great schoolboy of a man who was the King of England and his deadliest enemy, and he replied that to him it seemed scarce a fitting moment for such pastimes. Whereat King Edward laughed again, and having seen what he came to see, turned back once more into the forest, crying as he went that King Jean was at liberty to hunt and to fish as the spirit moved him. It was a sorely

abashed Prince and a scarcely less amazed King who continued upon their dignified progress towards London.

On the 24th of May, London was reached. King Edward, who had arrived in his capital before his royal guest and prisoner, had done everything to make the entry a brilliant one. One would almost have thought that Jean was riding to his coronation rather than to his prison. From London Bridge to Westminster the way was decked with banners and tapestries, the streets strewn with rose-petals, while above them were hung golden cages, in which lovely young maidens sang more sweetly than the birds they represented—a delicate symbol of captivity for the prisoner who rode beneath!

The narrow streets were so thronged with enthusiastic onlookers that it took the brilliant cortège some nine hours to push its way from London Bridge to Westminster. As it passed, the caged maidens rained down gold and silver flowers upon it, while the populace bellowed out its approval of its hero-Prince and its admiration of Jean who, captive though he might be, was still the King of France, and the greatest monarch in Christendom. Mounted on a great white charger he went in all his royal dignity, while the Prince rode modestly beside him on a small black hackney. Yet, for all the money and labour that had been spent on his reception, for all the enthusiasm of the spectators, for all the self-effacing courtesy of his captor, it may be that King Jean would have preferred a discreeter welcome, a less public entry into that great city that was to be his prison. It was doubtless with a sigh of relief that, having been the cynosure of all eyes for nine mortal hours, he at length found a shelter from the staring curiosity of the mob at Westminster. There King Edward, once more the dignified King and proud father, stood to meet him, with his gentle Queen, Philippa, at his side.

That night a great feast was given in his honour, such

a feast as might have brought a smile of anticipation to the face of a dead man. But King Jean sat before the gorgeous board silent and mirthless, amid all the eating, drinking, and gaiety. King Edward, who was perhaps not the most tactful of men, rallied him on his silence, and, laughing, bade him "sing and be merry." King Jean smiled as he answered, but there was no mirth in his words. He spread out his hands hopelessly, saying, "How shall we sing the songs of the Lord in a foreign land?"

But his little son Philippe who sat beside him was not driven to melancholy by the thought of his position; rather did his small body tremble under his efforts to control his rising anger. Nor indeed did he quite succeed in controlling it; for when the royal cup-bearer came forward and filled King Edward's cup before that of King Jean, the little prince leapt to his feet and cried to the man in a passion of rage, "Who then taught you to serve the vassal before the overlord?"

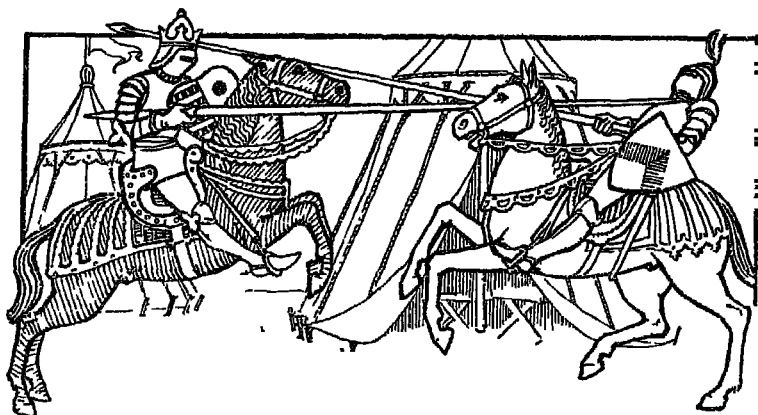
At first King Edward's face darkened, and he clenched his fists, for he was not accustomed to words of that nature being pronounced in his presence. But in a moment his frown relaxed and he smiled; for he admired a proud man, did King Edward, and here indeed was one who, if he were not exactly a man, was yet as proud a young sprig of royalty as he could wish to see. So he smiled at the lad, saying, "In truth, you are well named Philippe le Hardi," and bade his cup-bearer do as the little prince had demanded.

And it was no wonder that King Edward was affable of manner at that time; for he was a true Plantagenet, and the Plantagenets, while they have ever been cruel in adversity, were generous beyond praise when fortune smiled upon them. Fortune had indeed smiled upon King Edward, for he held now in his prisons his three principal adversaries—King Jean of France, King David of Scotland, and Duke Charles of Brittany. There would seem to be none left to stand in the way of his ambitions.

PART FOUR

“ Le Prince . . . très volontiers allait pour soi déduire, voir ladite dame, qui était sa cousine, et souventefois regardait sa très grande beauté et son très gracieux contentement, qui merveilleusement lui plaisait.”

Chronique des Quatre Premiers Valois.



PART FOUR

THAT year and the next, 1357 and 1358, were given up in England to a succession of festivals and tourneys in honour of the French king and his son. Nothing was too brilliant, nothing too costly for the entertainment of King Jean—and perhaps for the aggrandisement of King Edward in the eyes of his august captive.

But in France things were far different. Deprived of her king, of most of her great seigneurs, the kingdom had been given into the hands of a nineteen-year-old boy, and a boy who had not even the confidence of his people. For the Dauphin, Charles, Duke of Normandy, intelligent beyond his years though he might be, and learned beyond his times, had turned his back upon the field of Poitiers; and the common folk, though they could forgive most of the shortcomings of their seigneurs—their selfishness, their vanity, their reckless extravagance—could not forgive lack of physical courage, nor indeed were they often called upon to do so. Yet here was a seigneur, the greatest they had left to them, the heir to the throne himself, who had fled a battle, leaving his royal father in danger. So the people of Paris showed an unwelcoming face to the young Dauphin when he came home from the tragedy of Poitiers.

Etienne Marcel, the *Prévôt des Marchands* of Paris, raised the city against him; raised against him too his

brother-in-law and deadliest enemy, by freeing the King of Navarre. Moreover, he killed in his very presence his two most trusted councillors, the Marshals of Champagne and Normandy.

Marcel's intentions were pure enough, his ideals were lofty ; but they were unrealisable. He would have given democracy to the people, which was like offering strong wine to a child still at its mother's breast. The people drank of it eagerly, and for a little were driven mad. Nor was that Marcel's only mistake ; for looking at the King of Navarre, that brilliant, handsome, open-handed prince who prated so glibly of the rights of the people, he chose him for leader of his movement in place of the long, thin, ungainly lad that was the Duke of Normandy, and who went coldly and silently, draped about in his royal dignity. Etienne Marcel saw the brilliancy of the King of Navarre's outward seeming, but was blind to the unloveliness of his mind ; he saw the unloveliness of the Dauphin's person, but not the brilliance that burned within him. So Etienne Marcel threw in his hand with the King of Navarre, who mocked at him and betrayed him, leaving the Dauphin, with whom he might have accomplished much, to play a lone hand against the pair of them.

Marcel held the young prince virtually a prisoner in Paris, and offered him the regency of France, hoping thus to be able to rule the country through this white-faced weakling, who would not know how to wield the royal power when he held it. The Dauphin accepted the regency, and bided his time. Then one dark night he made his way almost alone down to the river Seine, and sought out a waterman whose barge lay against the shore. To him he disclosed who he was, and asked him to take him in his boat outside Paris. For a moment it seemed that the man would roughly refuse to serve the "coward of Poitiers" ; but centuries of loyalty to the royal house of France was a stronger thing than Marcel's wine of

liberty. The sceptre of France was in this young man's hand, the shadow of her sacred crown upon his brow. With a grunt the man took up his oars, and the Dauphin was Regent of France in very fact.

From Sens, where he took up his headquarters, the Dauphin cut off all supplies from Paris; and Paris was sobered at that, and realised that bread, even though it be the bread of servitude, is a more precious thing than the heady wine of liberty can ever be. Paris recalled her Regent, and made him a peace-offering of the dead body of Etienne Marcel.

The Regent Charles had won the first round of his fight to restore order and prosperity to the land of France; but much still remained to do, for the kingdom had never lain so low as during those years immediately after Poitiers. It was of this period that Petrarch wrote, "I could not believe that this was the same France I had seen so rich and flourishing. Nothing presented itself to my eyes but a fearful solitude, an utter poverty, land uncultivated, houses in ruins. Even the neighbourhood of Paris showed everywhere marks of desolation and conflagration. The streets are deserted, the roads overgrown with weeds, the whole is a vast solitude." But this vast solitude was soon peopled, peopled with the carrion crows of the Free Companies, with the starving wolves of the Jacquerie.

Out of the Champagne and the Beaujolais came the Free Companies, hordes of disbanded soldiers who, having been taught to ravish the land by those who led them to war, now ravaged it on their own account. Men of every nationality they were—Flemings, Germans, English, Navarrese, Gascons, French—but all served a common cause, that of plunder. Like a swarm of locusts they settled over the land, leaving it stripped naked in their wake, "for nothing came amiss to them that was not too hot or too heavy";¹ and that was little enough.

¹ Froissart.

Under this added misery to their already miserable lives, the peasants themselves, the patient "Jacques" of France, rose at last in revolt. Unlike the sturdy peasants of England, who had been able to win for themselves franchise after franchise, and who now stood firm-planted on their freehold farms and looked their barons squarely in the eyes, those of France were still sunk in the darkness of complete serfdom. They were treated as cattle—nay, not so well, for cattle are at least fattened before they are slaughtered. Beside the sleek cattle went the serfs, stunted, bent-backed men, with wizened monkcy-faces, skins blackened by the weather, limbs gnarled and deformed by pitiless labour. They scarcely seemed to be of the same race as those tall, white-skinned, supple-limbed aristocrats, who were their seigneurs and their owners.

In the old days, feudal rule had held level the scales of justice by giving the powerful protection of the seigneurs to counterbalance the weight of serfdom. The sword in one side of the scales, the ploughshare in the other, and the balance had been fair enough. But now the protecting sword was gone, and the seigneur laid nothing weightier in its place than a mocking peacock's feather of vanity, so that the peasants, with their ever-increasing load of *corvées* and *tailles*, sank ever deeper and deeper into an abyss of misery. The final depths had been reached with Poitiers.

It had cost them dear to send their seigneurs to that wasteful battle, but it would cost them dearer still to get them back. The ransoms in general amounted to half the value of a man's estates; and since he could not sell that estate, for most of his friends were in like plight, nor borrow, since the Lombards had been driven out of France, he ground his serfs to the very bone to raise the necessary money. If the peasants had sweated salt water before, they sweated their hearts' blood now, "to buy back from the English certain gentlemen who were useless to France."¹

¹ Simondi

The seigneurs had shown themselves incapable of sparing the peasantry the crushing tax of Poitiers, not even having had the grace, most of them, to get themselves killed in that battle; and now they showed themselves incapable of protecting them from the Free Companies, who wrung from them by terror and torture the few copper coins, the few ears of corn, that their masters had left them.

Driven to despair, they revolted at long last—a revolt all the more terrible since they knew that in the end it must be hopeless. They had been spurred on by the King of Navarre, with his prating of democracy; but when that Prince saw to his dismay that they had taken him at his word, and the law into their own hands, he turned on them, killing 3000 of them in a single day. Seeing that their only high-born ally deserted them when words were to be replaced by action, they realised that they could expect neither justice nor mercy from their lords, so they prepared to wreak such vengeance as they could before the terrible retribution that was to come fell upon them. Starved, half-naked, armed only with their implements of toil, frenzied with anger, suffering, and fear, they ranged over the country with the desperate ferocity of wolves in a hard winter. No gentleman came alive out of their hands, no gentlewoman unsoiled.

Their despairing courage led them to attack even great châteaux, and since death was indifferent to them, they sometimes succeeded in their enterprise, finding a moment's savage pleasure in the destroying of their lord's goods, the drinking of his wine, and the outraging of his women-folk. Even the town of Meaux they attacked, where the young Regent had sent his still younger wife and three hundred ladies of the court to seek refuge from the manifold dangers that stalked through the land of France. Nine thousand strong the Jacques entered the market-place of the town, and it might have gone ill with the ladies who sheltered there, had not the handsome and

gallant Count of Foix, who chanced to be in the neighbourhood, come to the rescue. With him came the Captal de Buch who, "though in the service of Edward, yet moved by generosity and by the gallantry of a true knight, flew to their relief, and beat off the peasants with great slaughter."¹

Though failing to share the good historian's surprised admiration that such a gallant gentleman as was the Captal de Buch should come to the rescue of helpless, though "enemy," ladies threatened with the vilest of horrors, we can well imagine that the ladies themselves viewed his arrival with no little enthusiasm.

The two captains brought but twenty-five men-at-arms with them, but that was enough to block the narrow entry of the market-place. After that, it was little more than butchers' work that lay before the steel-clad men faced by a mob of half-naked peasants. Nine thousand Jacques had entered Meaux, six thousand of them lay dead on the paving of its market-place when the bloody day was done.

Such were the problems that were given the nineteen-year-old Regent to solve during the two years following the disaster of Poitiers; his father a prisoner, his brother-in-law stirring up civil war against him, his country ravaged by war and invasion, his people battered upon by the Free Companies, his barons and his peasants killing each other in their thousands. The Peace of Bordeaux still held good—but there was no peace in the land of France.

While France thus tore at her own flesh in her agony, England gave herself up to a delirium of rejoicing. There were such novelties as jousts by torchlight, there were carousals, there were tournaments that outdid in splendour anything that had been seen since the days of King Arthur. In all these extravagantly costly entertainments King Jean took great pleasure, for he had the

¹ *Hume*

natural love of his race for brilliant displays of military skill ; yet his smile was sometimes a little awry, for, as he said, " I have never seen or known of such royal shows and feastings without some after-reckoning in gold and silver " ; and he had a shrewd idea out of whose pocket that gold and silver would eventually come.

The Prince, too, had his share in the rejoicings, taking an active part in the public joustings of London, where he appeared in person as senior Sheriff of the city, while his father impersonated the Mayor. There the two royal holders of the lists defied all comers, as the champions of the capital of England, much to the delight of its citizens.

But the young man had a more inspiring audience than that of the good folk of London, however enthusiastic ; and that was the fair ladies of his father's Court, and in particular, his lovely cousin of Kent. Joan was Countess of Kent now in her own right, since the recent death of her last brother, John, and no longer simple Dame Holland. She had regained her rank and her place at Court, so that she was once more fitting company for a Prince of the Blood. Prince Edward therefore kept her company ; common courtesy demanded as much, and, after all, one cannot be eternally at outs with one's own cousin—so he told himself.

Prince Edward was twenty-eight years of age now, and was still unmarried ; a strange thing in those days for the heir to a great throne. There was scarce a princess in Europe that he could not have had for the asking, many had been offered, some almost accepted. But ever at the last moment there had been some invisible barrier that held him back, some mysterious instinct stronger than his cold reason, that bade him say " No." So, having no lady of his own to play the gallant to, he peacocked it before his cousin—and what could be more seemly, more harmless than that ? Between his joustings and his feastings he often " very willingly went, for his distraction,

to see the said lady, who was his cousin, and contemplated her very great beauty and her very gracious demeanour, which pleased him marvellously.”¹

This rapt and unwitting contemplation of his cousin's beauty may have given him marvellous pleasure, but it pleased his father, who had a greater knowledge of the human heart than had his cold-natured son, a great deal less. Joan was Countess of Kent, a very noble lady of the house of Plantagenet, if you will ; but she was also thirty-one years of age, the mother of four children, and the possessor of a very efficient husband in the person of Thomas Holland. King Edward was perhaps unable to read in the closed book of his son's heart, but the writing in that of Joan of Kent's was clear for all who ran to read ; all, save only one handsome dolt of a young man. So King Edward looked about him, and saw that he had a château in Normandy, the château of Creyk, which lacked a governor. Who could be a more trustworthy captain for that strong place than honest Thomas Holland ? Holland should go to Normandy ; and since it would be a cruelty to separate so loving a couple, the King gave him gracious permission to take his over-lovely wife with him.

Countess Joan's eyes must have been eloquent of many things when she came to take her farewell, she must have bitten her tongue to prevent it being equally eloquent when the Prince kissed her hand—and let her go. But, lettered though he was, he had never learned to read the message in a lady's eyes, nor indeed those of his own heart. In such matters he was quite illiterate ; so he did no more than frown uneasily for a space, and then turn back to affairs that were within the scope of his understanding.

King Edward had hoped to gain by a stroke of the pen a greater victory, greater wealth, than all his sword-wielding had brought him these twenty years past ; for

¹ *Chronique des Quatre Premiers Valois.*

King Jean, sick with anxiety—such time as he was not too busy with his hunting and his feasting to think of such things—for the fate of his country, had said “Yes” to every concession that King Edward asked of him by way of ransom. He was willing to give the half of his kingdom, so that he be allowed to go home and save the other half from utter ruin. For what but ruin could overtake it in the hands of that gangling, sickly, long-nosed bookworm of an elder son of his? Why, the lad scarce knew one end of a sword from the other, and apparently had no desire to acquire that knowledge.

So he sent the Count of Tancarville and the Archbishop of Sens in hot haste to Paris—haste was necessary, for the Truce of Bordeaux had almost run its course—with the terms of his release for ratification by the States-General. Those terms were nothing less than the cession to the Crown of England of practically the whole of the western seaboard of France—Calais, Guines, Boulogne, Ponthieu, Normandy, the Maine, Anjou, Touraine, Poitiers, Saintonge, the Rochellois, Guienne, Périgord, the Limousin, Bigorre—and for good measure, 40,000,000 gold écus.

The young Regent took this interesting document in his hands, and read it with care; then, quite calmly, he tore it up—he, the sickly young *clerc*, whose arm was too feeble to wield a sword—and as calmly turned back to the work he had in hand, leaving his outraged father to stew in his own juice. That work was the making of Normandy too hot for the comfortable occupancy of the King of Navarre, and already he was on the road to success, for his brother-in-law was beginning to stir uneasily on his seat.

Not that the Regent went in person against his troublesome relative, for Poitiers had proven to him what he already suspected; that royalty on a battlefield may not be an unmixed blessing. So he followed his cousin of England's proud example by saying to himself, “France

shall never pay ransom of mine"—but he obtained the desired result differently, though equally effectively, by the simple process of keeping well away from the dangers and alarms of war. He had also learned that great seigneurs are not only expensive luxuries—and Charles the Regent was a frugal soul—but that they are often lacking not only in discipline, but even in utility. So he seated himself firmly at the council table, where he was as much at ease as he was awkward on the battlefield, and managed his wars from afar. For the more brutal requirements of his campaign he raked up from somewhere a rude, unlettered knight of Brittany, one Bertrand du Guesclin, who would be not only cheap, but effective.

It would be difficult to say whether King Edward or King Jean was the more surprised at the rejection of the Treaty of London by the young Regent. King Jean was amazed, and perhaps indignant, at seeing his royal wishes as king and father flouted thus by this gentle-spoken, meek-mannered son of his. King Edward was outraged at being defied by so unwarlike and monkish a youth as the Dauphin of France, he who held the greater warrior-king of that land a prisoner between his hands. From Prince Philippe he had borne much, for the lad had well earned his title of "le Hardi"; but from Charles the coward he would bear nothing at all. He set about his preparations for the invasion of France, and the chastisement of the undutiful son and disrespectful young prince.

So sure was King Edward of getting the better of what he took to be so futile a ruler as the Regent Charles, that having assured himself of the help of the King of Navarre, he proceeded to divide the kingdom of France with that versatile ally of his. Navarre was to have the Champagne, Brie, and Normandy, and Edward all the rest, including the Crown of France; not a bad bargain! The two then solemnly swore that "each would aid the other with their

bodies, soldiers, friends, and allies,"¹ for the furtherance of the common cause.

In the middle of 1359, King Edward began to collect his troops for this, which was to be his final bid for the Crown of France. One hundred thousand men came to his banners, "for the certain prospect of plunder from the defenceless provinces of France, soon brought together all the military power of England."²

And not only in England did men come to take part in the great expedition, but in France too, where every free-booter, every brigand, every hopeful land-pirate, came flocking about Calais, sure of being incorporated in Edward's army when he should cross the water. All through the summer months they collected, hoping for immediate action. By the end of September their numbers had become so great, and their impatience to start their business of looting so pressing, that King Edward began to fear that they might make a start on Calais itself, if other work were not quickly provided for them. So he sent over the Duke of Lancaster to keep them occupied until he himself should have arrived.

Lancaster set sail on October 1, and as soon as he reached Calais made haste to give the dangerous rabble that awaited him there something to do. He led them on a short raid up the Valley of the Somme, where they did all in their not inconsiderable power to replenish their pockets; for it had been agreed that, while they were to receive no pay, they should be permitted to keep anything they could lay their hands on.

King Edward's own departure had been delayed by news he had received of the astounding and unheard-of fashion in which the Regent was preparing to protect his charge. The amazing young man was raising no great army of resistance, as his father and grandfather had done in like circumstances; apparently he was giving no heed

¹ Rymer.

² Hume.

to matters military, but was busying himself with the unmartial occupations of seeing that all the crops were in, and of putting them and their harvesters behind the walls of his fortified cities. The herds and flocks were disposed of in a like manner, and even his captains and men-at-arms he rushed into safety behind stone walls. To King Edward's way of thinking, he acted more like a frantically clucking hen calling her chicks to safety within the coop at the sight of a hovering hawk, than like a scion of the royal house of France preparing to face an invader.

Nevertheless, the uncomfortable fact remained that the country through which the English army would have to travel, had been stripped bare of everything capable of being eaten, drunk, looted, or in any way utilised. This state of affairs, somewhat baffling to an army used to living off the country it traversed, made it necessary for it to carry with it every loaf of bread and every dried fish, every waggon and horse, every tool, and every stick or stone of which it might have need on the campaign. So as many as 8000 waggons had to be provided, and these laden with every imaginable article that an army on the march might require for its sustenance.

Edward of England was looking forward to being crowned King of France at Rheims, and it was a right royal progress through his prospective kingdom that he would make; so he took four of his five living sons with him, leaving behind him only the little four-year-old Thomas of Woodstock to act as a nest-egg in the unlikely event of disaster.

Edward the Black Prince was leader of the royal brothers, then came twenty-year-old Lionel, longer and gentler than ever, mild-mannered as often are men of his great size. In striking contrast to frank-mannered Lionel was John of Gaunt, with his subtle, secret manners and his clever, ambitious face. He was but a few months wed

to Blanche of Lancaster, daughter of the old Duke, and already looked forward to the benefits to be reaped from that match. Last of the four was Edmund of Langley, eighteen years old, mediocre of person and of intellect, but in whose honour it has been said that "he lived off his own, without oppression."¹

Besides the young Princes, there went on the expedition the Earls of Warwick, Northampton, Salisbury, and Stafford, and he of March, who was Constable of England. Chandos and Audley were of the party, too, and Lords Basset of Drayton, Grey of Codenore, Bartholomew Burghersh, and Edward le Despenser. And with the train of Prince Lionel there was a certain young "varlet" by the name of Geoffrey Chaucer.²

When all that host landed at Calais, "so great was the multitude that the whole country was covered with them, and so richly adorned and equipped were they that it was a marvel and a delight to see their glittering arms, their waving banners, and their waggons moving forward at a slow pace."³

When Lancaster had joined the royal army, bringing with him his horde of ruffians scarcely appeased in spirit, since the pickings in the clean-swept country had been more than meagre, the great host was ready to start on its triumphal march towards Rheims and the coronation.

The van was led by the Constable, the Earl of March, with 1000 archers and 500 knights, each one with a following of from twenty to thirty esquires. Then came the King in person with the bulk of the army, made up of 5000 archers and 3000 men-at-arms. Then came the artillery, the siege engines, and the great train of 8000 waggons, laden with supplies and provisions of all kinds.

¹ Hardyng.

² This was Chaucer's one and only venture into military life. He was taken prisoner during the campaign, and King Edward paid—doubtless somewhat reluctantly—£16 for his ransom.

³ Froissart.

Before them marched the "pioneers" with their tools, ready to repair and smooth the roads for their passage. The Black Prince himself led the rear-guard with his three brothers, and under his orders were 2000 men-at-arms and 4000 archers.

Historians of those days never sullied their pens with the enumeration of common, unspecialised foot-soldiers—they did not deign to note the humble "ribauds" and "pillards," and the still more lowly knife-men, nor even the "pauncenars," that peasant-soldiery peculiar to the English army; great, burly men chosen for their huge strength, which enabled them to march in armour. The names and numbers of these were not fitting to be written on the same page that was enriched with the names of dukes and earls, barons and knights; so that it is always an uneasy matter to guess at the true force of the armies of those days. But it has been said that 100,000 men took the road in that October of 1359; and if it be remembered that even the unmounted archer often had as many as three "shield-bearers" to serve him, while a wealthy knight might lead as many as fifty esquires in his train, it seems likely that the estimate is not exaggerated.

France lay open, desolate, helpless before the invader. The only spot of life and colour in all that huge grey desert was the English host on the march, with its banners, its plumes, the brilliant housings of its horses and the still more brilliant costumes of the riders. As gorgeous as a peacock it went slowly on its way, spreading its multi-coloured tail of knights and barons behind it. But soon those vivid silks and velvets lost their sheen, the bright steel was tarnished, the brave plumes bedraggled; for morning, noon, and night the rain never ceased to fall; a desolate rain, out of a desolate sky, over a desolate land.

Slowly that great host crept on, making no more than three leagues a day, dragging its spoiled finery through

the mud of the roads, uncoiling its dreary length over the dreary country, wet and cold and weary. Not even the pleasures of battle did it find to lighten its way, for the Regent Charles had raised no army to meet them, but had put his fighting-men behind the walls of the fortified towns, and bade them stay there. Not even the joys of looting did it have, for there was no loot, save within the forbidding walls of the closed towns. Both plunder and battle were shut up within those strong places, and neither would come out for the disporting of the English invaders.

From the walls of Amiens the face of the Constable of France, Moreau de Fiennes, looked down on King Edward's army; and King Edward bowed his head under the rain and passed on. In Arras was the Count of Saint Pol; in Bapaume, Edouard de Renti; in Saint Quentin, Baudoin d'Annequin, Maître des Arbalétriers; and over everything was the rain. Through Artois and Picardy the host trailed its mud-splashed way, and everywhere was the forbidding rain, the forbidding country, the forbidding roads, the forbidding stone walls, and the forbidding faces of the captains within them. Everywhere were desolation and rain, rain and desolation.¹

But King Edward kept his eyes fiercely set on his goal of Rheims—Rheims where he would be crowned King of France. Surely when his brow had been touched with the oils of Saint Rémi, that holy oil with which the kings of France from the time of Clovis had been consecrated, the people of France would accept him. Surely after that they would open their stubborn gates to him, break this uneasy, ominous silence that they kept, and receive him as their true lord. Surely the sun would shine for that most glorious day of his life!

Sullenly, drearily, ceaselessly, the rain fell.

On he pushed; and presently before him there arose another grey city, out of the grey nightmare of the rain.

¹ See map, page 19.

King Edward's heart leapt at the sight ; for there could be no mistaking those ancient walls, and still less the towering, stupendous strength and beauty of the great Cathedral that shouldered its mighty bulk towards the lowering skies—Rheims, the sacred city of the Franks—Rheims, half curtained from his sight by the desolate rain, but Rheims, the very goal of his ambitions, nevertheless. The great walls of Rheims, and within them the great Cathedral of Rheims—but upon them the great captain of Rheims, Gautier de Châtillon. The soldier's eyes were as hard as the granite walls, his face as chill as the rain. Rheims herself lay unwelcoming and indifferent before him who had come to be crowned within her walls : for was she, who had gazed upon Clovis and Charlemagne, upon Hugues Capet and Philippe Augustus and Saint Louis, to lower her eyes to this offspring of an upstart race, whose very name of Plantagenet was unknown to her ? She drew her grey walls about her sacred mysteries, covered her face with the grey veil of the rain, and gazed unseeing into time and space, over the head of the insolent clamourer at her gates.

The army set up its wet tents on the pale, chalky mud of the Champagne, and shivered in its wet garments before the chill November winds, while the King lay at Saint Bâle and the Prince at Saint Thierry, where they might hope at least to keep their skins dry.

The grey days passed, the grey rain fell, the grey city looked on, indifferent.

Foraging parties made half-hearted raids as far as Châlons, Laon, Soissons, Rethel ; but came back disconsolate, for the Regent had raked the country as clean of provisions as a careful gardener rakes a lawn clean of leaves. All that they found was deserted villages, fields naked of their crops, stables empty of livestock—and the rain, the rain——

To the Prince, the deadly monotony of the days was

galling beyond endurance. He had been used to rapid, brilliant campaigns through a fat, rich country, under a generous sun ; and this unending waiting under the unending rain, in the chilly mud of the Champagne, was more than his warlike nature could suffer. He would make an attack on that silent city, and force it to speak, and at least get the frozen blood thawed in his veins. So he built great wooden towers from which to assault the walls, and gathered huge bundles of faggots to fill in the moat, so that his engines might approach. The moat was duly filled up, the towers pushed forward into position, and still it seemed as if the city would not deign to notice the puny efforts of her besiegers ; but of a sudden, she spat out the fire of her contempt. Then the brushwood and faggots in the moat burst into flames, which rapidly spread to the great wooden towers themselves, and in a moment everything was ablaze. The result of days of toil and labour went up in smoke, and all the English had gained for their pains was the pleasure of being able to warm their cold hands at the bonfire of their thwarted hopes.

All through the last days of November, the hopeless siege went on, all through December, and the only change was that at times the rain turned to a bitter, stinging hail. The army went hungry now as well as cold, despite its 8000 waggons, and the mercenaries among them began to drift away, for they cared not a button whether Edward were crowned King of France or not. The only interest they had in the city of Rheims was the thought of the tremendous treasures that lay within its walls ; and since Edward seemed unable to give them that, then let him fish for his crown himself. For themselves, they had had enough of playing the barnyard duck in a muddy pond ; they would go and quack elsewhere. So they struck their dripping tents, mounted their shivering horses, and disappeared behind the driving walls of rain.

King Edward began to see at length that obstinacy

could not serve him here as it had done at Calais. He had starved Calais out, but now Rheims was starving him out. Reluctantly he loosened his grip about the city, reluctantly he turned his back upon it, and upon his dream of kneeling before the high altar of its Cathedral to receive the Crown of France. Reluctant he was to give up that dream, but give it up he must, for his men were suffering bitterly from hunger and cold, his horses dying in their hundreds.

Early in January he left the great city of Rheims to dream in peace of the glories of her past, and the glories still to come—which did not include the consecration of a Plantagenet within her walls. Hungry, wet, and cold the diminished host moved off towards the east, ever hoping to find food and drink, or at least a glimpse of the sun to warm their frozen blood. They marched past Châlons and Bar-le-Duc, past Troyes, and found nothing but desolation and emptiness, and the drenching rain. Then they came upon Tonnerre, which was a smaller town, and which, driven by desperation, they decided to assault. This they did successfully, and that was the first victory of that dreary campaign. Within its walls they came upon some 3000 pieces of wine, which caused a delay of five days—for bottled sunshine is better than no sunshine at all.

Somewhat cheered in spirit they moved on, revived by the good wine in their bellies, and by the knowledge that they were approaching the rich land of Burgundy, as yet unspoiled by war or by the attentions of the Free Companies. But the expectations of the common soldiers were dashed, if those of Edward were fulfilled; for the Duke of Burgundy, very rightly fearing for the safety of his rich duchy, forestalled the march of the English by the offer of 200,000 *moutons d'or*. This acceptable little peace-offering Edward took, and turned back towards the heart of France.

The Regent Charles watched the great circle that Edward was drawing about his capital, and gave no sign.

He knew that every day lowered the spirits of that cold and hungry army, already made despondent by the lack of plunder ; and since the heavens themselves had been pleased to fight for him so far, he was content to let things take their course. Cold rain-water is a munition that costs nothing, but that can be even more deadly than English arrows in the long run. Let the skies then continue their gentle, but ceaseless, nerve-racking assault, while he attended to other matters.

His father, King Jean, he knew to have been lodged in Somerton Castle, in Lincoln ; and he planned to make a descent on the coast of Lincolnshire, and rescue him, thus settling once and for all the vexed question of ransom, and at the same time creating a diversion that might well send King Edward bustling home about his own affairs. He put a fleet of ships under Jean de Neuville, and bade him set about the business. But Jean de Neuville went too slowly to work ; by the time he had prepared his ships and set sail from Saint Valery, those who had charge of King Jean had got wind of the affair, and had lodged their prisoner safely in the Tower of London.

So Jean de Neuville found the nest empty when he came egg-gathering ; but rather than achieve nothing at all for his pains, he landed at Winchelsea, and did great damage there, burning the houses and slaughtering the people unmercifully. But the hardy peasants of the county had no intention of allowing Neuville and his knights to wreak their vengeance on Winchelsea and get off unscathed. They were no miserable " Jacques " they, to fly at the sight of an armed man, but brawny, upstanding fellows, with fists like blacksmiths' hammers. Moreover, they were outraged that foreigners should dare to set foot on their shores, should attempt so barbarous a thing as an invasion of their country, particularly at a time when their king happened to be absent, busy with his lawful occupations elsewhere. So, armed with their said fists and the

various tools of their trades, they came to the rescue of Winchelsea.

The Frenchmen saw them come, but paid little heed, for these were men of the commons, and as such forbidden by the laws of chivalry to lay hands on a gold-spurred man. But the good peasants knew little and cared less about the laws of chivalry. They only knew that these were cowardly foreigners who took advantage of King Edward's absence to do him a mischief behind his back. So they forced the attention of these strangers who dared, forsooth! to invade a country not their own, by the effective method of splitting their helmets open with butchers' cleavers, and braining their horses with carpenters' mallets.

One lusty yokel caught his particular knight by the leg, dragged him off his horse, and flung him on his back on the ground, in order to deal with him in greater comfort. Then he began to beat upon him with his blacksmith's hammer, as though he were fashioning horse-shoes rather than holding converse with a gentle knight. The knight in question was amazed at such treatment, and somewhat alarmed—for he saw that if this business went on much longer, he would resemble nothing so much as a lobster on which a careless fisherman had set his heavy, booted foot. He saw, too, that his assailant knew nothing of the ways of chivalrous warfare, and was ignorant of the financial benefits to be gained from the human anvil on which he beat so lustily. Wishing to enlighten the ignorant yokel on this last matter, the unfortunate Frenchman cried out—between blows of the hammer—"Rançon! Rançon!" To which the sturdy peasant replied—still between blows of the hammer—"I know right well that you are a 'Francon'—that is why I am killing you"; and proceeded to do so. Which goes to show the benefits of knowing foreign tongues; for had the Frenchman been able to cry "Ransom!" he would have saved his life;

and had the Englishman known the meaning of "Rançon," he would have been rich to the end of his days. But as it was, the one lost his life and the other his fortune, all over a matter of accent.

Most of the Frenchmen, however, were more fortunate than their fellow, or they had stouter armour, and they made good their retreat to their ships, leaving Winchelsea a smoking ruin behind them. There were hundreds of towns in a like state in France, but nevertheless Edward, when he heard the news, was "greatly moved and wraithed,"¹ and he swore that he would take vengeance for Winchelsea on Paris itself; so towards that town he then bent his angry steps.

The Regent had played a bold move, but had failed to disengage his King; but so long as he himself lay entrenched with his knights behind his castles, and kept even his pawns well in safety, he might yet say "Check!" if not "Checkmate!" to the opposing king and that black knight of his, Prince Edward. Moreover, time—time and the eternal rain—were on his side. He could afford to wait; and he was a deep, silent well of patience, while King Edward was a troubled, hurrying river of impatience, who must either rush straight to the deep sea of his ambitions, or burst his banks and waste his strength in a useless flooding of a desolate land. So now, as though the stream of his impatience were swelled by the unceasing rains, he came rushing down on Paris, as though he would sweep it away with the might of his coming.

But Paris was no dried leaf to be whirled away on the waters of his wrath. It was a great dam of stern granite, set firm and immovable in his path. In vain he surged about it, in vain he shook the air with the roar of his menaces; Paris, the heart of the kingdom of France, lay as strongly silent before him as Rheims, her soul, had done. In vain Sir Walter de Mauny made a "bravado" before

¹ Tj. Brut.

the very gates, hoping to win by mockery what could not be won by threats; the gates remained closed and blind to all the caracolings and sword-brandishings of the good Flemish knight.

As for the Regent, he was as indifferent to insults as he was to threats. He had been called coward by his own people, and it had not harmed him; let these foreigners then mock at him to their hearts' content, he would not budge one inch from his chosen path for that. Not for an instant could the contempt of his adversaries disturb the calm workings of his mind, not for a moment could it make his cold blood flow hot with anger. He saw that he could not fight with any hopes of a victory, and nothing in the world would make him fight against his better judgment. So he sat behind the walls of Paris, as unchivalrous a knight as ever wore spurs, but as wise a ruler as ever sat upon a throne.

Then King Edward was forced, as he had been forced at Rheims, to see that he was beaten; not beaten by force of arms, but by a passive, silent, stubborn resistance; not by the valour of a King Jean, but by the patience of the Regent Charles. It was not the armed men of France who had worsted him, but the desolate land of France itself.

It was as though he had tried his strength against an adversary who covered himself with feather pillows, instead of with steel; an adversary who carried no arms of his own, but whose grotesque armour deadened and baffled every stroke of the lance, every blow of the sword. The Regent of France had not and could not inflict a defeat on the King of England; but he had made him look futile, absurd, in the eyes of his army and his country—he, the King of England, who tilted against pillows, and got no more than a mouthful of feathers for his pains!

Livid with rage, he turned his back on the insult of Paris, and went stalking blindly through the empty land, destroying whatever came under his hand—which was

little enough to assuage his evil temper, and far too little to assuage the itching palms of his men.

And then the Regent moved. Failing to rescue the King of France, he had failed to checkmate the King of England—but he would at least bring the game to a close with a stalemate. So he sent his Chancellor, Guillaume de Montaigu, and his Marshal, Boucicault, after the retreating King to offer him terms; and surely even a Plantagenet might listen to reason in the face of those two irresistible forces with which he could not come to grips—the weather and the patience of the Regent Charles. But Charles de Valois, though he could judge of the minds of men, could not judge of their hearts; and the heart of Edward Plantagenet was so sore that its clamourings drowned anything that his good sense may have had to say. He would accept nothing but the impossible terms of the Treaty of London. The Regent had torn up that treaty, let him then gather up the pieces of it and put it together as best he could. Edward would not help.

He turned his back sharply on the Regent's envoys, and went storming off towards Chartres. In vain the old Duke of Lancaster, who had a cooler head than his royal kinsman, reasoned with him. In vain he argued that, in spite of his past military successes, the object of the war, which was the Crown of France, was farther from his reach than ever; for those very victories had roused the kingdom of France against him, and the very men who might have greeted his peaceful accession with indifference, if not with pleasure, were now hot against him. Even the intestine trouble that had torn the country after Poitiers, and which, properly nursed, might have been of great advantage to him, had been checked by this new invasion, and men who had turned from the young Regent in disdain and anger, now came flocking to him to face the common enemy. Moreover, he pointed out, the Regent had had wits enough to prevent him gaining a single new foothold in the country.

The raids of the past had brought a certain amount of wealth to the partisans of the King, if not to the King himself; but this last one had but served to impoverish everybody concerned, and to set the people of France more bitterly than ever against accepting English rule. In any case, if he plundered the country much more, there would shortly be no plunder left; and then the France that he had fought so hard to possess would not be worth the taking. Let him then listen to the offer the Regent had to make; let him gain something at least out of this ruinous business, and then return quietly home to await a more propitious day.

But Lancaster might as well have urged the east wind to cease from blowing, as King Edward to listen to advice when he was angry; and Edward was angry, with the old, unreasoning, Berserk anger of his Norman ancestors. He would have all or nothing, he would have the Treaty of London, or he would tear France to shreds, as the Regent had torn the parchment of the treaty. He would not have the scraps that Charles might see fit to offer him, as though he were a beggar at the gates of the Palace of Saint Pol. So he went on, expending his anger on the countryside as he raged past.

He marched as far as Chartres, and lay there that night. On the next day, which was April 14, and Easter Monday, he pushed on again. It was a dismal winter's day, a "daye which was full darke of miste and haile, and so bitter cold that many men dyed on their horsebacks with the cold."¹ Despite the weather, they made another two leagues past Chartres, then of a sudden it seemed that the sky grew weary of this guerilla war it had waged with its arrows of rain and its sling-shots of hail, and decided upon a siege in form, with the terrible ballista-shots of its thunderbolts and the searing Greek-fire of its lightning. Then such a cataclysmic storm broke loose that "it seemed

¹ Holin. herd.

as if the whole fabrick of Nature was falling to pieces." ¹ Hailstones like cannon-balls came hurtling down, stunning and killing both horses and riders. Such lightning as men had never seen before ripped hissing and screaming through the air, and steel armour glowed red-hot, like some ghastly new instrument of torture. The whole army seemed to flame and burn like the funeral pyre of some great chieftain, whose warriors and horses were sacrificed alive with him.

King Edward beheld now a wrath greater even than his own, and that was the wrath of the elements. Men shielded their eyes against the livid flares of blinding lightning, proud barons cowered in the mud behind their terrified horses to shelter from the stunning blows of the immense hailstones. And the mad inferno of noise and flame went on, as though it would never have an end.

King Edward himself dismounted and stretched out his arms towards the distant towers of Notre Dame de Chartres, imploring that this horror might cease; but still the heavens roared and let down their fires upon him. Then he knelt on the trembling earth, and he, Edward Plantagenet, that proud King, laid his forehead in the mud and swore that if God would but stop this thing, he would make reasonable terms with the kingdom of France.

When at last that terrible convulsion of Nature was over, the King was able to look upon a thing new to his eyes: a lost battlefield. Upon that beaten and torn ground 1000 of his bravest knights lay dead, 6000 of his best horses, and how many more of the commonality, it is impossible to say.

Breathing a prayer of thanksgiving that at least he and his sons were still alive, he sent messengers in hot haste to bring back the Regent's messengers of peace without delay, lest the terror fall on him again.

On the 7th of May was signed at Bretigny, near Chartres,

the preliminary draft of the treaty that was later to be known as the Treaty of Bretigny. According to its terms, King Edward was to receive 3,000,000 gold crowns for the ransom of King Jean, and the provinces of Poitou, Saintonge, the Agenois, Périgord, Limousin, Quercy, Rouergue, the Anjoumois, the County of Ponthieu, and the towns of Calais, Guines, and Montreuil. Full sovereignty over these provinces and over Guienne was to be invested in the Crown of England, while France renounced all her rights of feudal jurisdiction or homage over them. Edward on his side renounced his claim to the throne of France and to the territories of Normandy, Maine, Anjou and the Touraine. King Jean was to refrain in future from alliances with the Scots, while Edward promised to do the same by the Flemings. As to Brittany, it was to be left to its own devices, and neither France nor England were to interfere on behalf of their own particular candidates for the ducal coronet, Montfort and Blois. Lastly—an unexpected and touching note in that general snatching after material benefits—a clause was added guaranteeing liberty of study in the French and English universities to students of both countries alike.

After this draft treaty had been duly drawn up and signed, the Black Prince and his father returned to England, where thanksgiving for the peace was offered in Saint Paul's Cathedral. And in July of that year, 1360, the Prince and the Duke of Lancaster escorted King Jean to Calais for the final signature of the treaty and the release of the King. King Edward followed a few days later, and two weeks of festivities took place in celebration of the event.

All should then have been ready for the ratification of the treaty drawn up at Bretigny; but it seldom happens that official business between countries is wound up without delays. So it was in this case, and it was not until the 24th of October that the two kings finally affixed their signatures to the Treaty of Bretigny.

In substance, the treaty was the same as that drawn up at Bretigny ; yet there was a difference. At the last moment, and at the suggestion of the Regent Charles, the clauses of renunciation—Edward's renunciation of the Crown of France and King Jean's of the overlordship of the territories ceded—were struck out of the main body of the treaty, and incorporated in separate and identical "letters of renunciation," which the two kings each promised to sign at Bruges before November 30th of next year, provided that "our said brother (of England or of France) shall have delivered to our people at the said place the renunciation to be made on his side."¹ In other words, neither king was bound to act until the other had done so ; and as both were certain to have the courtesy to say, "after you, my beloved brother," the clauses of renunciation seemed to be in some danger of non-execution. And thus did the Regent of France stalemate the King of England ; for a few fleurs-de-lys painted on the shield of the Plantagenets could do little harm to the Valois, while the overlordship of the ceded territories was a weapon of very real value.

The Regent Charles was unable to raise the first instalment of the huge ransom for his father, so King Jean accordingly "sold" his third daughter, Isabella, to a wealthy Italian, Bernado Visconti, Lord of Milan, for the requisite sum of 600,000 *moutons d'or*. But the worthy Italian, who was willing enough to give his gold for the privilege of calling the King of France "father," could scarcely be asked to pay in advance for perishable goods he had not yet received ; so during the interval it was arranged that King Jean should go free without delay, but should give hostages in witness of his good faith. Philippe le Hardi, his youngest son, was to be freed with him, but he was to deliver up his other two sons, of Anjou and

¹ Quoted by Ramsay.

Berri, his brother of Orleans, and his son-in-law, Louis II., Duke of Bourbon, son of that Pierre I. who had been slain at Poitiers. On the 25th of October these seigneurs arrived at Calais, the "Lords of the Fleur-de-Lis," as they were called, being of the blood royal of France. At the same time were delivered up as hostages Jacques de Bourbon, the Counts of Eu, of Longueville, of Saint Pol, of Harcourt, of Coucy, of Craon, of Montmorenci, and others; in all, thirty-seven princes, barons, and rich bourgeois. Then at last King Jean was declared free to go where he would.

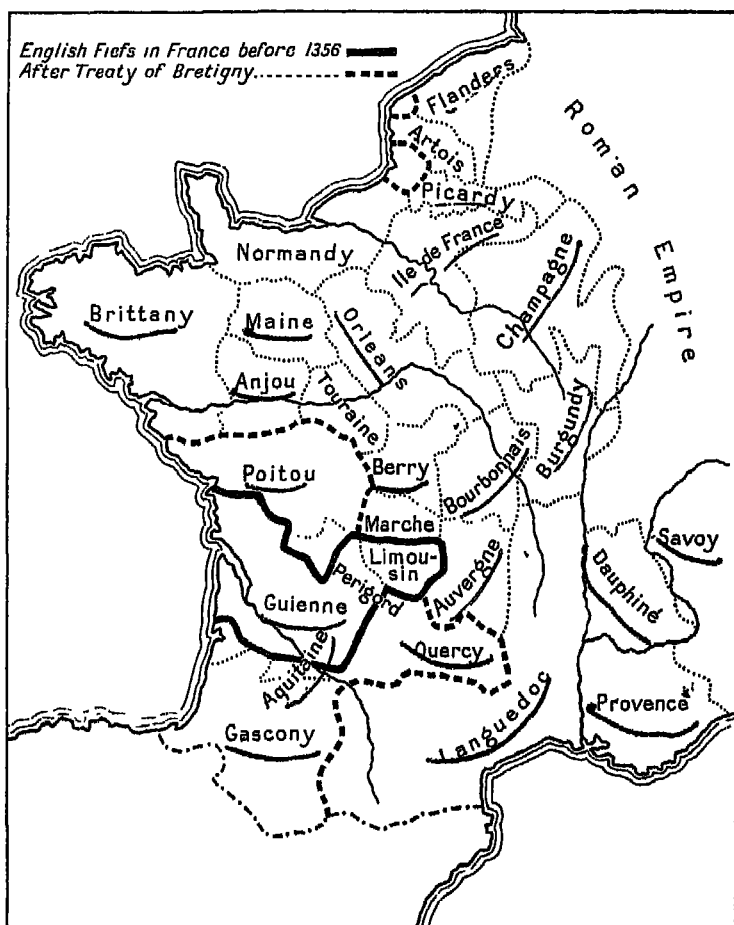
In England, nothing of note would seem to have taken place during the last months of that year, save, indeed, that it is recorded that "the devel appered bodyly in mannish liknes to myche peple as they went in diverser pleges in the cuntre, and spake to them."¹ This was undoubtedly an unusual occurrence even in those times, but was apparently not of the greatest import, since it is not recorded that Edward took any steps in the matter.

In France, not only one devil, but thousands, walked through the land and did more than speak to the unfortunates they met. These were the many mercenary soldiers, disbanded because of the peace, and reluctant to return to their native heaths. They joined the Free Companies, calling themselves the "Tard Venus," the late-comers, "because they had not as yet much pillaged the kingdom of France";² though they soon set to work to make up for lost time. Many Englishmen were among them—John Creswell, James Pipe, Hugh Calverly—and these plundered more or less at their own sweet will, since King Jean hesitated to chastise them lest King Edward say he had broken the peace by attacking his subjects.

Other unwelcome visitors there were in the kingdom of France at this time, too; and they were the Commissioners sent by King Edward to take possession of the lands ceded

¹ *The Brut*.

² *Prismeret*.



ENGLISH FIEFS IN FRANCE BEFORE 1356 ———.
 AFTER TREATY OF BREITIGNY -----,

to him under the Treaty of Bretigny. A wail of dismay went up from the towns and provinces that were called upon to change their allegiance; for the old Duke of Lancaster had been right, and King Edward's "visits," and those of his son, to his prospective subjects of France, had not endeared him to their hearts. All they knew of the King of England was that he had burned their homes and slain their sons, and they made desperate appeal to the King of France to save them. But the French king had signed them away, and he could do nothing for them, nor could his son Charles—as yet. So they made such resistance as they could by themselves.

The "capitaine de mer" of Abbeville, Ringois, refused to acknowledge himself vassal of the English king, and was accordingly shut up in Dover Castle to think things over. His second thoughts proving to be the same as his first, he was flung into the sea and drowned as a rebel. Moreau de Fiennes, the Constable of France, whose lands lay in the ceded County of Guines, also refused, and refused successfully, since a Constable of France can scarcely be drowned out of hand like an ill-mannered puppy. The Count of Armagnac refused to pay homage for his lands in Guienne until King Jean formally and in writing released him from his homage to the Crown of France.

King Jean could not refuse to give up his towns and provinces, but he could refrain from being over-zealous in his desire to aid King Edward's commissioner when he came to take possession. That commissioner was honest John Chandos, who was made Viscount of Saint Sauveur for the occasion. No better choice could have been made; for John Chandos, with his merry blue eyes and his shock of straw-coloured hair, was such a man as even his enemies must respect and like. A stern disciplinarian and hardy soldier, he was yet kindly, sympathetic, and, above all, just. He was of those who can knock an adversary down with one hand and then, raising him with the other, receive

nothing but gratitude for that helping hand offered to a man in distress. Such was John Chandos, "one of the best knights in the whole of England for his wisdom, his courage, his good fortune, his high enterprise, and his good council."¹

But even Chandos could not make it pleasing to King Jean to give up his lands; and when he came to Paris to receive the documents necessary for the taking over of the ceded territories, he found that the King had left his capital for Melun. On arriving in that town, he was told that the King was always bled on Mondays and could transact no business on that day. On the next day Jean was sufficiently recovered to become anxious for the comfort of the English commissioner, and advised him to return to Paris, where he would find food and lodging better suited to his station.

The King himself would follow later. Chandos, a model of tact and patience, took the hint, and went back to Paris, where, after some delay, the King did indeed join him, and on the 11th of August gave him the necessary papers of cession.

Chandos had then to find the Marshal Boucicault, head of the French commissioners. Boucicault was at Saumur, but strangely enough had left for Chatellerault by the time Chandos arrived. At Chatellerault, the Englishman found a message to the effect that the Marshal had been called away to Paris, so the unhappy Sir John could do nothing but sit down once more and wait. The other French commissioner, Louis d'Harcourt, was there, but would do nothing without his fellow. At last, on the 21st of September, Boucicault arrived; but only to fall sick with the greatest promptness. Recovered, he said that he must await the arrival of the Duke de Berri. At that, even the long patience of John Chandos snapped. He remarked that "these things seemed very strange,"² and demanded that a beginning at least be made with the cession of

¹ Froissart.

² *Ibid.*

Poitiers. At length Boucicault gave way and the town was delivered up.

On the 22nd of September 1361, John Chandos took formal possession of Poitiers in the name of his royal master. The Mayor came out to meet the English and French commissioners with the keys of the town in his hands. These he handed to Boucicault, who, in his turn, handed them to Chandos. Sir John then returned them to the Mayor, and entered the town. There he received thirty-seven chickens, seventeen kids, two calves, four sucking pigs, a hogshcad of wine, twelve pounds of crystallised fruits, and fish fresh caught in the moat. With that, the formal cession of the city of Poitiers was complete—and, one would imagine, John Chandos set up in his house-keeping for some weeks to come. But the citizens said openly, "You have our walls, but not our hearts."

Then came the turn of the seaport, La Rochelle. There the people were in desperate fear of English rule, since they had always been hardy pirates, and as such had done great damage to King Edward's shipping, and they dreaded his reprisals. "For God's sake," they cried to King Jean, "do not release us from our fealty to you!" But Jean had already released them, and the inevitable took place. "We will obey the English with our lips," said the Rochellois, "but our hearts will never be moved towards them."

Then Chandos moved south with his letters of cession. In that part of the country the nobles protested that King Jean had no right to transfer their allegiance against their wills, and that they had charters granted by Charlemagne to prove that his action was illegal. But the Treaty of Breigny overshadowed the charters of Charlemagne, and one by one the towns made their reluctant submission: Lusignan, Saint Maixant, Niort, Fontenai-le-Comte, Saint-Jean d'Angely, Saintes, Cognac, Angoulême, Ruffec, Parthenai, Thouars, Limoges, Périgueux. The towns of

Cahors, Figcac, and Moissac resisted for five days, but at length submitted with the rest.

But if John Chandos had trouble in taking over the towns ceded to England, his brother commissioner, Thomas Holland, had even greater trouble in delivering up to France the towns ceded by King Edward. Throughout Normandy, Maine, and Anjou were many strong places occupied by English captains; and these saw no reason why they should give up their hard-won châteaux because it had pleased King Edward to sign the Treaty of Bietigny. So, having had no hand in the making of the treaty, they flatly refused to have anything to do with the execution of it, especially as that execution spelled loss to themselves. They continued to sit firmly in the desirable residences they had conquered for themselves by the sweat of their brows, and when Thomas Holland appeared before their walls to order them to evacuate the premises, they refused either to come out themselves or to let him in. Moreover, they were wont to mock at him from their battlements—for they were men of an indelicate turn of mind—by saying that if he did not know how to keep his wife, they at least knew how to keep their châteaux—and kept them. It may be that this ribaldry was too much for the honest man and doting husband that was Thomas Holland, for on the 28th December 1360, he died.

In this year, 1361, King Edward decided that it was high time that his son and heir should find a wife, being in his thirty-first year, and still unmarried. Looking about him, his choice fell upon Marguerite of Flanders, the young widow of the Duke of Burgundy, and only child of Louis de Male, Count of Flanders. She, young, handsome, a tremendously wealthy heiress, would make a desirable match from every point of view; but, as ill-luck would have it, that year also saw the return to England of Countess Joan of Kent, widow of Thomas Holland.

Doubtless, her cousin of Wales came often to condole with her on her widowhood, and doubtless he enjoyed the business, after his own strange fashion ; for if Joan of Kent was no longer a shy bud, she had the splendour and the rich perfume of a full-blown rose ; and withal she was " en son temps la plus belle femme de toute la royaume d'Angleterre, et la plus amoureuse." ¹ She in her turn must have looked with pleasure, if with no little amazement, on this " flower of chivalry " who did not know how to comfort a bereaved and lovely widow save by words ; this gallant knight who did not know how to serve a lonely lady save by sage advice ; this Prince who did not know, in fact, that a lady does not weep for the absence of a Thomas Holland in the presence of an Edward Plantagenet.

Nor did she weep, that most amorous of ladies, for the fires of her impatience burned up any tears she may have had in her heart for the father of her children. Rather did she tap with her foot and bite her lip at the stupidity of this dolt of a young man, who could not see what was as plain as the nose on his handsome face. Rather did she yearn to tell him bluntly that his reputation for chivalry was ill-earned, since a sword-arm that can do no more than deal blows might as well belong to the lowliest churl as to a Prince of the Blood ; since a mouth that can do no more than give advice could equally well be the ornament of a prating lawyer as of a gallant knight. He might as well have been her father-confessor, with his words of comfort. Words ! Did the good fool think that lips had no other mission than the shaping of words ? Day after day he came and delivered his lectures and his sermons, and day after day her uneasiness increased, for with each sunrise the shadow of Marguerite of Flanders lay more ominously black between them, and she was afraid. But she gave no sign, for she was " subtle and wise." ²

Then, on a certain day, Prince Edward came to her

¹ Froissart.

² *Chronique des Quatre Premiers Valois.*

with a solution for her trouble, a cure for her solitude. He proposed marriage—with one of his friends! Brocas was the name of the gentleman in question, and whose praises the young man sang to the unwilling ears of the Countess Joan. He was a personal friend of the Prince's, and must have been high in his favour, since Edward thus complacently consented to act as his ambassador in so delicate a matter.

Surely a lovely and amorous widow might have been excused if she lost her temper at that, if she told him what she thought of him, this upstanding, two-fisted young man who came a-courting in the name of another. There he stood, the handsomest prince in Europe, before the loveliest woman in England, and offered her—Brocas! Brocas! to her whose heart, ever since she had known she had one, had silently cried another name unceasingly, whose lips trembled to cry it aloud now.

But she was a lady "subtle and full of guile,"¹ and she made no complaint; only she said, very gently, that she would marry no man. Then, "Ha, ha!" cried the Prince, frowning, "fair cousin, if you will not marry my friend, then is your great beauty an ill thing."

But still she repeated that she would marry no man. She stood before him, looking at his angry face, and she who had not wept for the loss of a husband, wept now because another husband was offered to her. Silently she stood before her cousin, with the careful, graceful tears that fair and subtle ladies know how to shed slipping down her desolate face.

Prince Edward's ill-humour vanished at the sight of her distress, and he came towards her, all contrition for his rough words. He came towards her, took her in his arms, kissed her.

"Fair cousin," he said, "he for whom I speak is one of the bravest knights in England, and of very gentle birth."

Would he never have done with his Brocas? Was

¹ *Chronique des Quatre Premiers Valois.*

this thing then possible, this miracle, that a man of the house of Plantagenet should hold a lovely, weeping woman a willing captive in his arms, and find nothing better to do than sing the praises of his "gently-boin" friend to her?

She drew away from his embrace then. The formidable weapon of her tears had failed her, but she, too, was a Plantagenet, and not one to acknowledge defeat.

"Ha, Sire!" she whispered through her sobs, "I beg that you will not speak to me of such things. For I have for ever given my heart to the bravest man under the skies, and for love of him, no other spouse but God shall have me as long as I live. It is impossible that I should have him; but for his sake I will keep company with no man, nor ever marry."

The Prince lifted his head at that, and his eyes burned—though it was only the fires of pride that lit them. What was this? His own cousin, his admiring playmate of old, could look him in the face and say to him of another, "the bravest man under the skies"—to him, the hero of Crécy, the victor of Poitiers? His face began to flush with anger. Who was he, this incredible paladin, this impossible hero, who dared to vie in courage with Edward the Black Prince? Who was he? he demanded to know.

But Countess Joan, that subtle lady, would not tell him. The more heated he became, the more he railed at her, the more she meekly cast her eyes down and modestly implored him to leave her her secret. A rival in love had left him indifferent, but she had given him a rival in chivalry, and that he could not brook; he would not leave the field to the unknown challenger of his reputation. The weeping lady before him had at last aroused his jealousy—a martial jealousy, it is true, but jealousy nevertheless. She had aroused a passion of some sort in his heart—and when all is said and done, one passion is much like another when properly handled.

He stormed at her now, and she bent her lovely, meekly obstinate head before his anger—but she would

not tell him. At length he threatened her. She must disclose to him who was this bravest man under the skies, or his affection for her would turn to hatred. Then she swayed and trembled as though in mortal terror; and even as King Edward had knelt before the storm of Heaven's displeasure, so she knelt before the storm of Prince Edward's anger. Kneeling there, she spoke, saying :

" Very dear and dread lord, it is yourself. For love of you, never shall any knight lie beside me."

Silently, with bent head, she knelt before him. Would the flood of passion she had let loose follow obediently along the course she had laid out for it? And if so, would it be strong enough to sweep aside the obstacles of Brocas and Marguerite of Flanders? But she need have had no fears. For Prince Edward had, after all, a heart; and she had at last found the key to it. That key, it is true, was pride; but what matter the key, so that the prisoner within be at last set free? It was indeed a poor, half-starved captive that now came stumbling awkwardly into the full light of day, and one on whom the Prince looked amazed, for he had never even guessed at its existence. Half-starved it was, and now that it was free, it set up a great clamouring for food; and then Prince Edward became aware of a sudden that it was he himself who had been a-hungered these many years past, he himself who craved for the sweet flesh that was offered to him.

The Countess Joan was in his arms once more, but it was no fraternal embrace that held her now, nor was there a plea for an absent friend in the voice that said, " Lady, I swear to God that never any other woman than yourself, as long as you live, shall have me."¹ And thus :

" For hir beaute all onely he hir tooke,
And wed her so, and to Guyan went."²

¹ This scene is largely extracted from the *Chronique des Quatre Premiers Valois*.

² Hardyns.

King Edward had desired nothing more than to see his eldest son wed; but now that the thing was done, he was far from pleased. Rather, he was more angry than he had ever been before in his life—which was saying a good deal. His heir, who might have had a Marguerite of Flanders and the broad lands that went with her, to choose instead a Joan of Kent, a woman older than himself, and with three children living; a woman, moreover, with a tarnished reputation. A Prince of Wales, a future King of England, to prefer the widow of simple Thomas Holland to the widow of the last Duke of Burgundy! The thing was grotesque, impossible.

Grotesque it may have been, but impossible it certainly was not. For Prince Edward, once he had made up his mind—or had it made up for him—could brook no interference, nor even any delay. He would not so much as await the Pope's dispensation, necessary because of the degree of consanguinity existing between himself and his cousin. The ceremony of the "espousals" was gone through at once, and by the time wind of the affair came to King Edward the thing was done, and the two were living in complete, if guilty, happiness.

The erring couple were in danger of excommunication, for they were, in the eyes of the Church, living in the blackest of sin. Nothing could save them from eternal damnation but a dispensation from Pope Innocent VI.—and that King Edward would not for some time ask for. Perhaps he hoped that the threat of excommunication would daunt even his hero son, perhaps he thought that the young man, once he had eaten his fill of the fruit of sin, would be willing to turn to more substantial and more profitable nourishment. But such was not the case. For many years Prince Edward had had no great appetite for love; but his was a case of which the saying, "Appetite comes in eating," was only too true. The weeks passed, and he gave no signs of surfeit or of indigestion. So at

length his father gave way, lest the greater scandal of excommunication be added to that of *mésalliance*. In the end he gave a grudging consent, and wrote to the Pope, begging that His Holiness grant a dispensation for the marriage.

The document duly arrived in September, and in October the formal wedding took place. The ceremony was performed at Windsor by Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Islip, and in the presence of Queen Philippa and her younger sons (save only long Lionel, who was absent, having been appointed that year to occupy the thorny position of King's Lieutenant in Ireland). Queen Philippa witnessed the marriage of her eldest son, but King Edward would not lend his countenance to the occasion. He had submitted to the folly of his heir, but he would not look on at the committing of that folly. Queen Philippa might forgive, for she was the mother of Prince Edward and the foster-mother of Countess Joan; she loved them both, and she asked no more of either of them than that they be happy. But King Edward was a sovereign before he was a father, and he could neither forget Marguerite of Flanders nor forgive Joan of Kent.

The people of England were not satisfied either with the mating of their Prince, which they would have had as glorious as all the other acts of his life. Further, they said that while it was true that one of the Countess's husbands, Thomas Holland, was dead, the other, the Earl of Salisbury, was very much alive. So that, as they saw things, any children she might give the Prince would be no more than royal bastards at the best—and who had ever heard tell of a king setting his bastards upon the Throne of England? No, the people did not like it, and for the first time a shadow of unpopularity followed Prince Edward when he walked abroad.

[But even had he wished to do so, King Edward could

not long keep his eldest son in disgrace. Prince Edward was the best captain and the most authoritative governor he had, and so was indispensable to the King in his plans for the future. Moreover, Prince Edward was as yet the greatest soldier of his day, and, as such, had learned to command, but not to obey. Then, if obedience were impossible to him, he must be given command, if use were to be made of him.

In Aquitaine, John Chandos had at last received the submission of all the towns that fell to the Crown of England under the terms of the Treaty of Bretigny. The thing had not been easy, but as the good John had proved himself to be unfailingly "mild and very courteous, and a good companion to men of all estates,"¹ he had at length brought his labours to a good end. All was done now save the giving of the liege-homage; and that could scarcely be paid to simple John Chandos, for all his good qualities. So it would seem that once more a member of the royal family must cross the waters to Aquitaine.

In King Edward's mind, vast projects for the future were beginning to take shape, and they centred about his great Duchy of Aquitaine.² So in July 1362, he created of Gascony and Guienne a new principality—the principality of Aquitaine—which he gave into the hands of his eldest son, to be held by him in liege-homage, and by the nominal payment of one ounce of gold a year. And thus, in his thirty-second year, Edward the Black Prince was able to style himself Prince of Wales, Duke of Aquitaine, Duke of Cornwall, Earl of Chester, and Earl of Kent.

At the same time the King declared that if such should be his good pleasure in the future, he would erect those

¹ Froissart.

² Aquitaine corresponded roughly to the Valley of the Garonne, and was one of the great divisions of Roman Gaul. Later divisions had made of it Guienne, Albret, Gascony, etc., but the ancient name was still commonly used to designate that group of south-western duchies and counties.

dominions into a kingdom ; a declaration that caused some stir in political circles, as it was generally held that none but the Pope or the Emperor was entitled to make such an erection. It caused not a little perturbation too, for it seemed as though Edward, if he could not have the Crown of France, was at least determined to have a crown in France—and it is seldom that there is room for more than one crown, even in a kingdom of the size of France.

But whatever his future intentions might be, it did not seem that an indefinite prolongation of the Treaty of Bretigny figured very largely in them. For he enacted that every able-bodied man in his kingdom should practise archery to the exclusion of every other sport, writing as follows to the various sheriffs of his kingdom :

“ Whereas before these times the people of the country, as well noble as ignoble, commonly exercised themselves in the art of archery, and thereby did honour and were of use to the whole kingdom ; whereas now, as if entirely putting aside the said art, the same people take to the throwing of stones, wood, and iron ; and some to hand-ball, foot-ball, and stick-play ; and to the fighting of dogs and cocks ; and some even indulge themselves in dishonest and less useful games ; it is to be proclaimed that every man in the country, of able body, on feast days, shall use bows and arrows, and shall learn and exercise the art of archery, and shall give up these vain games under pain of imprisonment.”¹

At this time, too, King Edward made an effort to suppress the use of the French language in his kingdom and to introduce the English tongue ; though it is doubtful if he himself was overglib in that language. French had always been spoken by the artistocracy since the days when William the Conqueror had vainly striven to master the complexities of English grammar ; but now the very commoners themselves were striving to learn French, to

¹ Rymer.

the detriment of the mother-tongue. And we are told that "in so moche that thi childer of nowble men, after that thci were taken from the cradelle, were sette to lerne the speeche of Frenchmen; wherefore churles seenge that, and willing to be like to theyme, laborede to speke Frenche with alle thciure myght."¹ It is true that the worthy chronicler hastens to assure us that these misguided commoners made but little progress in their reprehensible efforts to acquire the artistocratic fashion of speech of their betters, since they "laboured agayne nature in the manner of a voide stomacke."² Nevertheless, the spread of French fashions, culture, and speech seemed to Edward to be undesirable; and he enacted that henceforth all official acts should be written in Latin or English, and all lawsuits tried in these tongues.

"In this yere was seen in the aine certaine castelles, and hostes of men issuing out of them fought eche with the other untill the one of them had vanquished the other."³

Such was the omen seen in the skies by the people of England before the departure of their Prince for Aquitaine; and a very useful omen it was too, since it could be interpreted to suit the tastes of all beholders.

It was in February of 1363 that Prince Edward set sail for his new principality of Aquitaine, with his wife and all his household. He landed at La Rochelle, where honest John Chandos came to meet him. With that wise and mild-mannered councillor of his he went to Poitiers, to receive the somewhat unwilling homage of the seigneurs of Poitou and Saintonge.

While on this expedition, the Prince received an invitation from the Count of Armagnac to visit him in the Bigorre. It may be that Prince Edward was somewhat surprised at such an offer of hospitality from that most reluctant of all his new vassals; however, anxious to con-

¹ Higden.² *Ibid.*³ Grafton.

ciliate so powerful a seigneur, he went. But it was not for the pleasure of gazing on the face of his new master that Armagnac had issued his invitation; it was rather as one who would say, "You have claimed your right as overlord, and received my homage against my will; and now I claim my right as vassal, and demand your protection." For no sooner had the Prince and his train arrived at Tarbes, and enjoyed the sumptuous feast that the dour-faced Armagnac had prepared for them there, than he stated his grievance.

It would seem that some little time earlier, he had, in one of his numerous squabbles with the Count of Foix, been so negligent as to allow himself to be taken prisoner by that handsome young man. Foix had not lost the opportunity to avenge himself on his bosom enemy, and had in consequence taxed the unhappy Armagnac with the trifle of 250,000 francs by way of ransom. It was against this ruinous demand of Foix's that Armagnac appealed to Prince Edward, demanding bluntly of him that he do his duty as overlord, by protecting him from the rapacity of his other vassals.

Prince Edward refused to have anything whatever to do with the matter. In the first place, this was an affair of honour, and not for the interference of the law; and in the second, he knew very well that nothing he could do to favour Armagnac would bring him over to the English side of the fence. But Foix was another matter; Foix already sat astride of that fence, and the slightest push or pull might decide on which side of it he decided eventually to place his feet. Armagnac was wholly against English rule, Foix half favoured it; and the half-loaf of Foix was better than the complete lack of bread of Armagnac. So the Prince refused to interfere on the latter's behalf.

The Princess, however, was new to authority, and the prospect of exercising it was not displeasing; and perhaps, too, having had her way with the handsomest man in

England, she was not loth to see what the power of her beauty might be over the handsomest man of France. In any case, when Gaston Phœbus in person, brilliant as the young sun-god for whom he was named, came with his splendid retinue of sixty knights and esquires to pay his respects to the Prince of Wales, the Princess did not hesitate to bring her batteries to bear upon him. With the assurance of a beautiful woman certain of her power, she barely gave the young man time to kiss her hand before she begged of him that he grant her a gift.

The natural courtesy of a Count of Foix bade him consent without more ado ; but the equally natural caution of a Béarnais told him to walk carefully about this mystery of a nameless gift, lest it prove to be a trap out of which he could not escape without losing more of his plumage than he cared to sacrifice, even for so lovely a lady. So, acting on the principle that it is wise to strike the first blow in any contest, even against a lady, he made haste to attack with a small offer, lest he be forced to defend himself against a great demand. Spreading out his delicate hands in a gesture of graceful humility, he said,

“Madame, I am but an humble man and a poor bachelor-knight, so I can make you no very great gift. But if that which you would ask of me has no greater value than 50,000 francs, then I give it to you right gladly.”

Now Princess Joan had awaited a far greater victory than that ; she had hoped—more, she had expected—the unquestioning surrender of Foix, and the unconditional granting of the boon she asked of him ; and that boon was the complete remission of Armagnac’s ransom. Not, probably, that she had any very tender feelings for that forbidding and bleak-faced soldier, but that she wished to see yet another man helpless before the power of her beauty. But she who had found the fault in the armour of the stalwart Prince Edward, could find none in the fragile-seeming Count of Foix. Gaston Phœbus, with his

own great beauty, had been used since childhood to the cajolings of women, so that now even the Fair Maid of Kent left him indifferent. He did not lack in knightly chivalry, for had he not flown to the rescue of the royal ladies at Meaux ; but he did not deem that the dictates of chivalry demanded that he make a fool of himself. So to all the pleadings of the Princess of Wales he answered firmly :

"Madame, for the poor knight that I am, the gift that I have offered you must suffice."

Seeing that her authority had gained all it could, and her beauty could gain nothing at all, she would at least savour to the full the small victory she had won.

"Count of Foix," she said maliciously, "the gift I have obtained from you is in favour of the Count of Armagnac."

Foix stiffened at that, and his eyes flashed dangerously. He was angry, bitterly angry ; but his anger could not make him depart from the great courtesy that belongs to the Counts of Foix.

"Madame," he answered coldly, "I must needs bow to your wishes. I have said that I will accord you 50,000 francs, and that I will do. The Count of Armagnac owes me 250,000 francs ; at your prayer and request, I hold him quit of the 50,000."

It is not recorded what Prince Edward had to say to these meddlings of his wife's ; but since they left the Count of Foix angry, and the Count of Armagnac dissatisfied, it is probable that they left him both angry and dissatisfied.

Leaving Armagnac to his loud-mouthed complaints, and Foix to his silent resentment, the royal couple proceeded to Bordeaux. In that town, on the 15th of July 1363, Prince Edward received the homage of 180 mayors, consuls, and pro-consuls. There, too, the powerful Sire

d'Albret ¹ came to pay his homage, with his splendid suite of seventeen barons, twenty knights, and eighteen esquires. Then came the great "tournée d'homage," that was to last over eight months. Bergerac was visited, and Périgueux, Angoulême, Cognac, Saintes, Saint-Jean d'Angely, la Rochelle, Niort, Saint Maixant, Agen.

To Agen came Gaston de Foix to pay his formal homage; and there he put his hands between those of Prince Edward and swore fealty and homage for his viscounties of Marsan and Gavardan; but when the question of the County of Béarn was raised, he refused flatly. Getting to his feet he said stiffly, "I am as much master in Béarn as King Edward is in England." And so, for the sake of 50,000 francs and the caprice of a beautiful woman, the great County of Béarn was lost to the new Duke of Aquitaine.

After the "tournée d'homage" was over, the royal household retired to Angoulême, where they set up their Court, since Prince Edward had a predilection for that town. There the Prince held such state as the people of Aquitaine had never seen nor dreamed of before. "Never," Chandos Herald assures us, "since the time of our Lord's birth was seen such great hospitality as he offered, nor so honourable; for every day he had at his table eighty knights and full four times as many esquires."

This extravagant lavishness at first excited the admiration of the childish hearts of the Gascons; but soon it became only too clear to their very mature minds that all these "jousts and revels at Angoulême and Bordeaux" ² must be paid for with rivers of gold; and that that same gold must of necessity be raised by means of taxation. Now the men of Gascony were as richly endowed with the

¹ Arnould Armanieu, Sire d'Albret, son of the Bernard d'Albret already referred to.

² Chandos Herald.

gifts of Mother Nature as it is possible to be, but of gold and silver coins they had never been too well supplied. Let anybody drink their wine and eat their grapes who would, and they were as generous as Nature herself ; but let anybody cast a covetous eye towards their meagre store of minted money, and their fists clenched as hard and as tight as their native oysters. Wherefore they looked with some dismay on the prodigious hospitality of their lord and his lady, and with some resentment too, when it became apparent that those eighty knights and over three hundred esquires who daily profited by that hospitality were almost exclusively English.

Another cause for dissatisfaction they had too, and a far graver one ; and that was the manner of distribution of offices. The seigneurs of Gascony had come forward with outstretched hands and eager smiles to receive their share of that distribution, for the officers of Prince Edward were richly remunerated, and able to live in such sumptuous state as brought the water of desire to the hungry mouths of the Gascons. But once more they met with rebuff ; the Prince named none but Englishmen to help him rule his great duchy, none but Englishmen received the titles and honours he allotted with so lavish a hand.

Prince Edward was a great soldier ; but it is a rare thing for a man of high military worth to make a good ruler. And so it was with him. The very qualities that had served him so well in war turned against him in peace. His stern discipline became tyranny ; his pride of race—that strong weapon—became a scourge of contempt for his foreign subjects ; his self-reliance soured into arrogance. Even his high personal courage that made him indifferent to physical dangers, blinded him now to those of a political nature. In times of war, his hard indifference to any will other than his own had led him and his Gascon fighting-men to brilliant victory ; and now he would rule them in

their own homes with the same ruthlessness—and that, in times of peace, must spell inevitable disaster.

As a soldier he had enriched his Gascon followers, and he had given them pride of place in his army. But now, as a governor, he threatened to impoverish them, he wounded them in their honour of free-born men. So they stirred uneasily under his rule, and their resentment found tongue. They were not a vanquished race, they, to be enslaved and trampled upon by a foreign conqueror; they were free men, and their freedom was precious to them. They would swear fealty to a foreign overlord if they needs must, but they would not be ruled in their private lives, hindered in their comings and goings, watched over as though they were the denizens of a private game-preserve. The King of France had left them to manage their own affairs; then why should this son of a King of England take upon himself to manage their affairs for them? A sullen murmur of resentment rolled over the country, like the warning smoke of a forest-fire.

Prince Edward heard it, and his fine, proud eyes hardened, his wide, arrogant shoulders stiffened. None, since he had been a child, had dared to gainsay his wishes—none, not even his royal father—and he would not submit now, in the maturity of his middle thirties, to being thwarted by men who were his inferiors in rank and in race. He was the Duke—and perhaps the future king—of Aquitaine, and these people had been given into his hands as completely as a flock of sheep might be given. It was he alone who would allot them their pasturage, he alone who would name the shepherds to watch over them. It was for them to offer their backs for the shearing at his good pleasure, and nothing more.

John Chandos too heard that smothered murmur of discontent, and the sound misliked him, for discontent is the seed of revolt. He was not the owner of this turbulent flock of Gascons, but he was the head shepherd, being

Constable of Aquitaine ; and upon him devolved the task of seeing that restraining fences were not overthrown, that forbidden pastures were not invaded. But he did not frown upon his charges, did not thrust them aside ; instead, he went among them with that simple good-fellowship of his, that understanding mind that made him " good companion " of men of every class and every race, and soothed them with his firm but kindly hand ; and at last quiet was restored over the agitated country. Quiet, yes—but it was the brooding quiet of ill-omen that comes before earthquake or tidal wave.

On the 8th of April 1364, there died at the Savoy Palace in London, Jean II., King of France. He died a prisoner, but a prisoner more of his own honour than of the King of England. Two years earlier, one of his hostages, his own son Louis, Count of Anjou, had seen fit to break his parole and come running home to his young wife, where he had remained, despite the remonstrances of his father. Whereupon King Jean, seeing that if the honour of the Valois was tarnished, he could yet save the honour of the King of France, gave himself up in his son's place, a voluntary prisoner. And so that tall, impetuous, red-headed man that was Jean de Valois proved that he was a true knight, if a foolish king, by dying in captivity in a foreign land.

France had indeed lost a gallant knight in him, but she was to be more than recompensed by the acquisition of a very great king in the person of his eldest son, Charles, Duke of Normandy. Never were father and son less alike than were Jean le Bon and Charles le Sage. Jean had been a leaping flame of a man, swept hither and thither by every wind that chanced to blow, burning as fiercely in love as he did in battle, so that in the fifty-fifth year of his age there was nothing left to burn, and his brilliant if destructive life came to an end.

Compared to him, his son was like a grey owl beside a

bird of paradise. Silent, meditative, secret, he would sit for hours at a time in his chair, studying the affairs of the kingdom with a power of concentration rare in a young man of twenty-seven. Where his father had sought the society of men of action of all kinds, Charles preferred the company of those who "spoke good Latin, and were argumentative."¹ While Jean encouraged the vestimentary follies of his all too-willing courtiers, Charles would not suffer "men at his Court, however noble and powerful, who wore their garments too short, nor their shoes too outrageously long, nor women sewn into their over-tight gowns, nor with their necks too low-cut."²

Jean had been as comely a man as one could wish to see, and vigorous of his person. Charles was long-nosed and white-faced, thin as a bean-stalk, though his shoulders were wide enough. He was sickly of health, almost crippled, being half-paralysed of his right arm and hand, so that he could wield no heavier weapon than his quill-pen. His father had been boisterous, high-spirited, and not over-chaste of mind or body. Charles was cold and reserved, almost prudish in his morals; a strange young man, better fitted, one would have thought, for the cloister than the palace. Yet he had a real and very potent charm of manner, when it pleased him to exercise it, a voice of great beauty, and the knowledge of how to use it. He seldom laughed, but when he wished, he could smile with the heart-breaking sweetness of an angel of Rheims. Such was the young prince who, on the 19th of May 1364, received the sacrament of the holy oils of Saint Rémi, and the homage of the peers of France: a man for whom "kingship was a charge, and not a dignity."³

Shortly before the consecration of Charles V., there was fought in Normandy the battle of Cocherel. This was nominally an affair between Navarrese and French,

¹ Christine de Pisan.

² *Ibid.*

³ Macbrinnon.

an unsuccessful attempt on the part of Charles of Navarre to prevent, or at least to delay, the coronation of his brother-in-law, Charles de Valois. But it had its importance for Prince Edward, too. In the first place, it brought the crushing defeat of his ally of Navarre; in the second place, it showed him many of his own Gascons—Petiton de Curton, Amanieu de Pommier, and others—fighting under the banner of France against that same ally of his. This they had a legal right to do, since England was at peace, and they were at liberty to sell their swords where they would; but it was an ill sign. Again, that battle of Cocherel saw a mixed army of English and Navarrese, such as had won the battle of Poitiers, almost wiped out by a French army of inferior force than its own, and holding a less favourable strategic position. There, too, one of his best captains, and the only Gascon to receive his full confidence and favour, the Captal de Buch, in command of the Navarrese troops, had been out-generalled and out-fought by the obscure leader of the French, the Breton knight, Bertrand du Guesclin.

The name of Bertrand du Guesclin was certainly not unknown to Prince Edward, he having fought hardily against the English in his native Brittany; but it is doubtful whether he recognised the magnitude of the new star in the military firmament that rose over the field of Cocherel; for du Guesclin, with his ugly, flat-nosed face and his thick barrel of a body, was a man of humble birth. Moreover, he was already in his forty-fourth year, an age when many men were thinking of relinquishing the sword for ever, and not of carving out a career for themselves with it.

It took the subtle judgment of the new King of France to see that behind that gargoye of a face there burned the flame of pure military genius; that in that thick chest dwelt such a firmness of purpose that could bend even kings to its will. Of Bertrand du Guesclin, knight of

Brittany, King Charles made a Count of Longueville, a Marshal of Normandy, and a royal chamberlain.

Normandy had at length become too uncomfortable for the occupation of the King of Navarre. Du Guesclin had poked at him with his sword, and King Charles with his pen, until at length even that resourceful and versatile little man must admit himself beaten. Under the bludgeonings of du Guesclin he abandoned his lands in Normandy, and accepted the town of Montpellier in their place; and under the prickings of King Charles he signed the Treaty of Vernon, by the terms of which he became once more the loyal supporter of the throne of France.

The King of Navarre, then, was quiet for the moment; but the Free Companies were another matter. As never before they ravaged the unhappy land of France, as never before they were numerous and powerful. Most of their leaders were men who, under the Treaty of Bretigny, should have quitted France these many months ago; so King Charles appealed against them to King Edward. King Edward therewith wrote to his son, and bade him restrain the ardour of the marauding bands; but the Prince saw more of good than of evil in their activities since, being for the most part English, they spared his lands of Aquitaine, and expended their energies on the despoiling of France; and that seemed to him to be a desirable state of affairs. Further, he had a more important thing than the misdeeds of the brigands to occupy his mind at the moment; for on the 27th of July, his lawful heir, Edward, was born.¹

Seeing that he could expect no help of his neighbour of Aquitaine, King Charles again appealed to King Edward for help against the Companies. Nothing but a regular campaign could get the better of them, so powerful had

¹ Prince Edward had two illegitimate sons, Sir John Sounder and Sir Roger Clarendon.

they become ; and Charles invited Edward to join him in such a campaign.

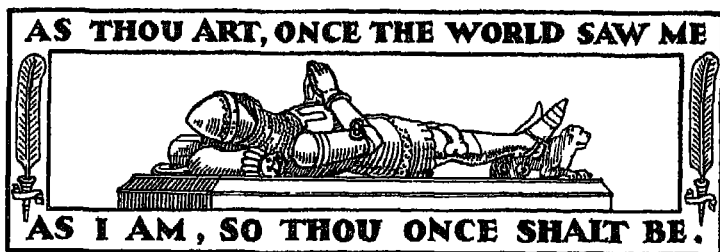
King Edward replied with an enthusiastic acceptance of the proposal, and straightway set about raising forces for its execution. But his very enthusiasm planted a seed of doubt in the subtle mind of King Charles, and the size of the force his ally collected to bring into France caused it to grow into a certainty. So, feeling that he would rather endure the gangrene that ate into the flesh of his kingdom than suffer the dangerous ministrations of Edward's amputating knife, he hastily thanked his cousin of England for his goodwill, and prudently withdrew his request. Being no soldier himself, he turned the matter of the Companies over to his Breton captain, du Guesclin, who was indebted to him over the matter of a ransom, and bade him work out his debt by ridding the country of their unwelcome presence.¹

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¹ Du Guesclin had been taken prisoner on the 28th of September 1364, at the battle of Aurai, in Brittany, by John Chandos, and ransomed by King Charles for 100,000 francs.

PART FIVE

" Let us so act this day that we may depart in honour."

PRINCE EDWARD.



PART FIVE

"THER was suche a debate and fightyng of sparrows, by divers places in thes dayes, that men founden unnumerable multitudes of hem dede in feldes as they wenten."¹

In England, the sparrows slew one another ; in France, the brigands slew that great soldier, Jacques de Bourbon ; while in Spain, King Pedro the Cruel slew his young French wife, Blanche de Bourbon, sister of Duke Louis and sister-in-law of King Charles himself.

She had been given to Don Pedro to serve as a bait to trap him to a French alliance ; but not for one instant had the frail charms of her sixteen years been able to divert his attention from the mature beauty of his mistress, Maria de Padilla. He refused to receive her, but for a little he allowed her to live in peace, shut up in a lonely tower at Medina Sidonia. Then, the mere fact of her continued existence seeming to cast a shadow over his passion for his mistress, he caused her to be slain—smothered under her pillow, it was said, by a secret envoy he sent for that purpose.

King Pedro was beloved neither by his subjects nor by his neighbours, for he had well earned his ominous surname. He had wrested the throne of Castile from his eldest brother's son, Charles de la Cerda ; he had snatched part

¹ *The Brut*.

of his territories from Pierre IV., King of Aragon. He had done away with Leonora de Guzman, the mistress of his father, King Alphonso, and he had tried to do away with her son, Henry of Trastamara, who was his own half-brother. He had ill-treated papal envoys sent to rebuke him, and refused to obey a summons to Rome to answer for his sins.

All these things had aroused the indignation of his subjects; but at the murder of the little French princess their anger knew no bounds. They would have no more of this bloody-handed tyrant to rule over them, they swore, and forthwith looked about them for a king better suited to their tastes. Their choice fell upon Henry of Trastamara; he, though illegitimate, was yet the eldest son of their late and well-beloved king, Alphonso XI. Henry was a very gallant knight and a courteous gentleman, while Pedro was—the indictment is Froissart's, and not our own—"a *bougre* and a bad Christian."

So the good folk of Castile asked Henry to become their king, legitimising him for the occasion by the simple process of announcing that, in fact, Leonora de Guzman had been the lawfully wedded wife of King Alphonso; which convenient discovery allowed them to declare Henry to be the legal heir and Pedro the bastard. Henry was willing enough to fall in with their wishes, but he could scarcely rid the country of his unwanted half-brother without help. Help, however, was forthcoming, for Pierre of Aragon promised to co-operate with him, on condition that he received back his lost territories in the event of success; while on the 9th of June 1365, Pope Urban V. excommunicated Pedro and declared himself to be in favour of Henry. But an even greater help than that was to come to him, in the ungainly but powerful shape of Messire Bertrand du Guesclin.

Du Guesclin, when he heard of the doings in Spain, pricked up his ears, for his sturdy Breton good sense told

him that it was an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and that this particular tempest might be made to serve the ends of his royal master of France. So he hied him straightway to Chalon-sur-Saone, which was the headquarters of the Free Companies and where was Sir Hugh Calverly, the Englishman, leader of them all. To Calverly he pointed out the manifold advantages of a campaign in Spain against the excommunicated king, Don Pedro. Not only, he argued, would the Companies profit by the undoubted financial benefits of invading a country which had not as yet enjoyed their attentions, but they would save their immortal souls from hell-fire; for this was by way of being a crusade, since its aims were to avenge an innocent and royal lady, and chastise a heretic king. The Pope, he said, would take care of their souls, while Henry of Trastamara, once they had set him upon the throne, would look to their material welfare.

Hugh Calverly listened favourably to this harangue, for it was the truth that France was picked almost clean; and the thought of plundering the fat land of Spain did not displease him. The salvation of his soul perhaps interested him less, but since it was offered him for nothing, as a sort of make-weight, he saw no reason to refuse it. So he agreed to follow du Guesclin "wherever it might please him, and fight against anybody, either here or overseas."¹ Anybody, save only Prince Edward. "For," he said, "so soon as he needs me, I will go to him: this I have sworn."

"So be it," said du Guesclin, and the pact was made.

In the middle of 1365, du Guesclin set out with his band of cut-throats and thieves. He was intent on killing two, if not three, birds with one stone: he would rid France of the Companies, avenge Blanche de Bourbon, and set a pro-French king on the throne of Castile.

¹ *Cavalier*.

Du Guesclin took over 30,000 brigands out of France, and at their going the unfortunate country began to smile and stretch its limbs, like a man delivered from a nightmare. But there were honest men on the expedition, too : there was Jean de Bourbon, Count de la Marche, the Marshal d'Audrechem, the Count of Auxerre, and many other noble seigneurs.

Early in 1366 they came flooding over into the kingdom of Aragon, and from there du Guesclin summoned King Pedro to return King Pierre's lands to him. But Pedro "did no more than laugh, and answered that he would do nothing of the kind, and that he would never obey such ruffians."¹ But he soon laughed after a different fashion ; for du Guesclin and his ruffians took Borja and Mangulon, Briviesca, and even Burgos itself, where the "Bastard," Henry of Trastamara, formally assumed the Crown of Castile.

Then "Don Pedro dared tarry no longer ; but betook himself incontinent to Saville, where his treasure had remained. He caused galleons and ships to be prepared, and his treasure stored in them. He embarked with haste, so the story runs ; and by day and by night he sailed, until he reached the port of Corunna, which is in Galicia. And the "Bastard" was no fool ; for he rode through Castile, and not a city remained that was not in his possession : there were neither counts nor barons that did not do him homage. . . . By the common accord of all the barons was Castile conquered thus, and by the power and enterprise of Sir Bertrand du Guesclin."²

From the relative safety of Corunna, Don Pedro wrote to Prince Edward "in very piteous fashion,"³ begging that he help him against his half-brother, the villainous "Bastard." On the receipt of this letter, the Prince sent for his two most trusted councillors, John Chandos and Thomas Felton, and asked for their opinion on the matter of a campaign to put Don Pedro back on his throne.

¹ Froissart.² Chandos Herald.³ Froissart.

Felton and Chandos looked at one another but did not speak. They knew a great deal about Don Pedro, and that which they knew made them dislike the idea of flying to his aid ; but they knew Prince Edward too, and that knowledge made them loth to offer advice which, though asked for, was seldom either desired or heeded. So they held their tongues and looked at each other. But at length Chandos opened his mouth and said, " Monseigneur, he who tries to accomplish too much, often ends by accomplishing nothing."

But he might as well have gone on holding his tongue, for Prince Edward did no more than flare out at him, saying, " Chandos, Chandos, I have known the day when you have given me other advice than that ! " Ay, there had been a day when he had said, " Sire, ride forward to the charge, for the day is yours ! " but that had not been for the service of Don Pedro.

Prince Edward had asked for advice, he had received it, and he acted in consequence ; that is to say, he ignored it. Only one concession could Chandos wring from him, and that was that he hear Don Pedro's story from his own mouth before committing himself to a campaign in the Spaniard's favour. To that the Prince consented, and sent Felton post-haste to fetch the fugitive King from Corunna. But Pedro had not waited to be sent for, and before Felton could reach him, he had set foot on English territory, at Bayonne. Hearing of his arrival, the Prince went forward to meet him, and came upon him at the town of Saint Martin.

Don Pedro came humbly into his presence, hat in hand, like an esquire craving a boon of his master. There was nothing kingly in his bearing, and his fashion of bowing was more cringing than it was courteous ; for " more amiably he did it, I certify, than before the image of the Virgin Mary." ¹ Then he began to speak, and he was as

¹ *Chivalier*,

glib as an over-clever scholar, as persuasive as the advocate of an evil cause. He told how he, the only legitimate son of King Alphonso, had been driven from his throne through no fault of his own by the bastard Henry and the brigand du Guesclin. How he had been chased from town to town, a helpless fugitive, harried by the foreigner, denied by his own people—how in him the divine right of kings had been flouted and made a mockery of. Then, having stated his case, he made his plea.

"Sire," he said, "I say it without flattery, that in appealing to you who are the noblest of a royal line, I appeal to honour, prowess, and courtesy; I appeal to the flower of chivalry, to the sword of the valiant; Sire, I appeal to you against this villainy. For I am disinherited for all my days, and my heirs for ever, if you do not give me back my honour that has been taken from me."

It has been said that the Bastard of Trastamara was no fool; but it would seem that his half-brother had his wits about him too, for he knew well enough how to plead before his royal judge. He invoked the divine right of kings, and that was Prince Edward's religion; he appealed to chivalry, and that was the principle article of his faith. According to his creed, a king was given to his people by God, and if he chose to destroy those people, then he was a divine scourge sent to chastise them, and they must bear with him meekly. None but God had a right to reprove him, none but Death might dethrone him. Royalty was the government of God made manifest; and royalty must uphold royalty, else would the whole world go down into chaos. So to force a bloody-handed tyrant back upon his protesting people, would be to obey the law of God; and Prince Edward was true to his faith. He took Don Pedro's pearl-embroidered hat in his hand, saying, "Even as I set this hat upon your head, so, by the Virgin Mary, will I set upon it the crown of Castile!"

John Chandos shrugged his shoulders helplessly; for

he knew that he might wag his wise tongue from now until doomsday, and Prince Edward would not so much as be aware of his talking. As well argue with Prince Edward's shield as with Prince Edward, once his mind was made up.

To show his appreciation of the present favour, and his eager anticipation of favours to come, Don Pedro presented his protector with a table, all of solid gold. Prince Edward displayed the gift to his wife, thinking to please her, and to show her how generous even fallen royalty could be. But she looked at it askance, saying, "I fear that evil will come of all this. It is a rich gift, but it will yet cost us dear." She was uneasy—for in looking at Don Pedro she, with her woman's eyes, had seen the man, and not the king.

At Bordeaux a meeting of the notables, both English and Gascon, was held, at which the Prince declared his intention of aiding Don Pedro to regain his throne. The Gascon seigneurs raised some objections, since the Spaniard's character made him no very fitting subject for knight-errantry. But Prince Edward silenced them.

"I know," he said, "the evil reputation of Don Pedro, and ill enough has he done; but it is not a question of his character, but of his royal rights. It is not fitting or reasonable that a bastard should drive him out of his kingdom and usurp his heritage. No king should on any account suffer this, for it is greatly to the prejudice of the royal state."

"It is not a question of his character but of his royal rights"—there was the argument of Prince Edward, and to him it seemed conclusive. That Pedro was a murderer, a torturer, a heretic, meant nothing—he was a king, and that was everything.

One concession he made, however, and that was to ask the consent of his father before setting out on his avenging expedition. King Edward agreed, for Pedro was

an ally of his, and could be more useful in the future than pro-French Henry. The Gascons heard the reading of King Edward's letter, and replied, "We will obey the command of the King, our overlord; but we would know who will pay us for our services."

Don Pedro came hurrying forward at that, more ingratiating, more eager than ever. He would pay, he said; he would pay all that was necessary, and more besides: 550,000 gold florins would he pay, 250,000 for the expenses of the Prince, and 300,000 more for the wages of his captains and men. Moreover, he would give the Province of Biscay to the Prince, who could make himself king of it, if such should be his pleasure. Oh yes, he would pay—but in the meantime, would Prince Edward lend him some money?

The Prince obliged him, breaking up his silver plate for the purpose. Then negotiations were opened with Charles of Navarre; for the English army would have to traverse his lands in order to enter Spain, since the frontiers of the King of Aragon were closed to them. Don Pedro and the Black Prince met the Navarrese king at Bayonne, and asked him if he was prepared to open the passes of Roncesvalles to them. A lesser man than the King of Navarre might have been embarrassed at the position in which he found himself—he had sworn to his brother-in-law of France not to help the English, and he had but recently made an alliance with Henry of Trastamara, whereby he had sworn to close his passes to Don Pedro. But Charles of Navarre was not to be deterred by such trifles as these; moreover, an alliance—a profitable alliance, naturally—was a temptation that it was beyond his power to resist. He would have allied himself with the devil on one day, and taken the cross of a crusader on the next, if any advantages could have been wrung from such an arrangement. But here the advantages were clear enough, for Don Pedro offered him the towns of Guipuzcoa, Vitoria,

Logroño, Calahorra, and Alfaro—a tempting bait. Charles of Navarre did not resist it over-long, and promised that the armies of Prince Edward should find the passes of Roncesvalles open, should they chance to come that way.

It was not until early in January 1367 that Prince Edward's host was ready to take the road. He was eager for the adventure, but his lady wife was not, for she trusted neither Don Pedro nor the expedition on which he was leading her beloved husband. Every day she pleaded with him, imploring him not to leave her, until he became impatient, saying that if she had her way, she would keep him ever by her in her chamber; and strode away, leaving her to her tears.

Then she wept to herself, "Alas! what should I do, God of Love, if I were to lose the very flower of nobleness, the flower of lofty grandeur, he who has no peer in all the world for valour?"

The God of Love could not keep her lord for her, but honest Mother Nature could at least delay his going. This she did by bringing the Princess to bed of her second child before her time. On the 6th of January 1367 was born Richard, who was to be that tragic Richard of Bordeaux. But the future was a closed book to Prince Edward, and he looked upon the birth of so lusty a son as a good omen, and said, smiling, "Behold, a right fair beginning!"

In these circumstances, the Prince grudgingly afforded his wife another month of happiness; but early in February his patience was at an end, and he left for Dax, where the bulk of his army awaited him. Taking leave of his weeping wife, he said, "Lady, we shall meet again in such wise that we shall have joy, we and all our friends, for my heart tells me so." But Prince Edward had never been a great reader of hearts, his own or anybody else's.

At Dax his great host awaited him, so numerous and so noble that it would have sufficed "had there been thirty kings."¹ Of the English, there were Hugh de Hastings, John Cresswell of the Free Companies, William and Thomas Felton, Lord Neville of Raby, Roger de la Ware, and many more whom it would be idle to number here. Among the Gascons, Petiton de Curton, the Counts of Armagnac and Foix, Hélie and Amanieu de Pommier, Bernard and Perducas d'Albret, the Sire de Mussidon, the Captal de Buch and Arnould Amanieu, Sire d'Albret—this latter in an evil temper, for he had set out for the rendezvous with a lordly 1000 spears at his back, and had been rudely checked by the Prince, who told him that 200 would suffice. Wherefore d'Albret smarted in his pride of one of the greatest seigneurs of Gascony.

To Dax, too, came the Prince's young brother, the secret-faced John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who brought in his train the English captain, Robert Knolles. Knolles was an able leader, but he had been one of the greatest of the brigands to batten on France, making himself master of forty châteaux. In the Loire he had ravaged from Tonnerre to Vezelay, where his ill-fame became so great that the charred gables he left behind him were called "Knolles mitres." With Lancaster, too, there came the famous Breton captain, Olivier de Clisson, who had embraced the cause of England when in 1349 Philippe VI. of France had executed his father for treason. It can be said of him that he served the English not because he loved them, but because he hated them a little less than he hated the French.

It was with such an array as this that Prince Edward set out on his mission of knight-errantry. On a bitter winter's day, Monday, the 15th of February, he crossed the passes of Roncesvalles; crossed them unhindered, for Charles of Navarre had found a way out of the tangle of

¹ Chandes Field

his various alliances, by allowing himself to be taken prisoner by one of du Guesclin's Bretons. In prison, he could scarcely do anything to help or hinder anybody, and so he reckoned that his word of honour was intact, and his reward assured, whoever should be the winner of the campaign.

At Pampeluna, the army halted to get its breath after the terrible struggle through the snow-blocked passes of the Pyrenees, and there Hugh Calverly, true to his word not to raise his sword against the Prince, came to find him. Du Guesclin had let him go readily enough, for he was a man of loyalty himself, and respected loyalty in others, while Don Henry had praised him, and bade him go freely to serve his natural lord. With Hugh Calverly came many other English members of the Companies, and so Prince Edward's army was strengthened by many a doughty sword.

Don Pedro was back again now in his kingdom of Castile, but he had not yet recovered his crown. That seemed to be for ever dangled just out of his reach, for Don Henry, under the able leadership of du Guesclin, kept ever on the move, and would not come to grips. Du Guesclin knew right well that, greater though his own forces were than those of his antagonist, they were no match for the army of Prince Edward. For the English and Gascons, though they numbered perhaps no more than a scant 18,000, were all proven soldiers, all "*gens de fait*." Du Guesclin had some 60,000 men under his orders, but of these he could count only on his 2000 French and Breton knights, for he knew that the Spaniards, lightly armed and lightly mounted, carrying for the most part no more than javelins and slings, would be as able to stand against the heavily-armed men of Prince Edward as a child's sandcastle before an incoming tide. So he sought to win by subtlety what he knew he could not win by force, sought to replace the slings and javelins of his Spaniards with the stronger weapons of hunger and fatigue.

Week after week the pursuit went on, and week after week the English and Gascons pushed on doggedly through a hostile country that had been wiped clean of provisions before them. Week after week they grew leaner and wearier, more disheartened at this chase after an enemy that was always just over the horizon, but never within sight. And so it came about that, on the 2nd of April, they were at Logroño, and so far no blow had been struck, save for a disastrous engagement between scouting parties, in which William Felton, and the 200 spears he had with him, lost their lives.

Prince Edward was angry, for this was a new type of warfare that he did not understand ; Chandos was anxious, for he saw that if du Guesclin pursued his tactics much longer, he would win his campaign without striking a blow or losing a man. But du Guesclin's wise though unspectacular strategy was not allowed to take its course ; for at length, at Najera, Don Henry, urged on by his brother Don Tello, resolved to turn and fight. Du Guesclin knew right well the folly of such an action, but under the orders of his royal master, he could do no more than shrug his shoulders and prepare to give as good an account of himself as he might.

Hearing that at last he was to have battle, the Prince left Logroño and marched to Navarette, to meet Don Henry. There, from the top of a hill, he could see the tremendous Spanish forces pouring up towards him from Najera. It was not a reassuring sight, but Prince Edward heartened his hungry and weary men, saying :

"Sirs, there is no other end. You know right well that we are nigh overcome by famine from lack of supplies, and you see there our enemies, who have plenty of everything ; but we must conquer it with our swords. Then let us so act this day, that we may depart in honour."

Then he set about ordering his forces. The van he gave to his brother of Lancaster, under the wise general-

ship of John Chandos. He himself held the centre, with the Breton Clisson on his left wing, the Captal de Buch on his right, while the Sire d'Albret and the Count of Armagnac ordered the rear. In the Spanish host, du Guesclin with the Marshal d'Audrehem and his French and Breton knights held the centre, facing Chandos and Lancaster. Don Henry commanded the centre behind him, with his brother Don Tello to his left, and the Count of Denia on his right. Behind the whole lay the great rear-guard of infantry, some 40,000 strong.

Seeing that all was ordered to his liking, the Prince raised his hand and cried, "Advance, banner, in the name of God and Saint George; and God defend the right!" Then, turning to Don Pedro, who was stationed beside him, he said, "Sire King, to-day will you know if ever you will have Castile again!"

It was the van-guards that closed first, to mingled cries of "Castile au roy Henri!" and "Saint George, Guienne!" and the shock of their meeting was like that of two bulls, coming tremendously together, forehead to forehead. In that first encounter, du Guesclin surged forward a full spear's length, and John Chandos himself reeled and went down before a huge Spaniard, who towered over him like a tree. That would have been the end of Sir John then, had he not clutched at the dagger that hung at the Spaniard's belt, and driven it home with a grunt of satisfaction.

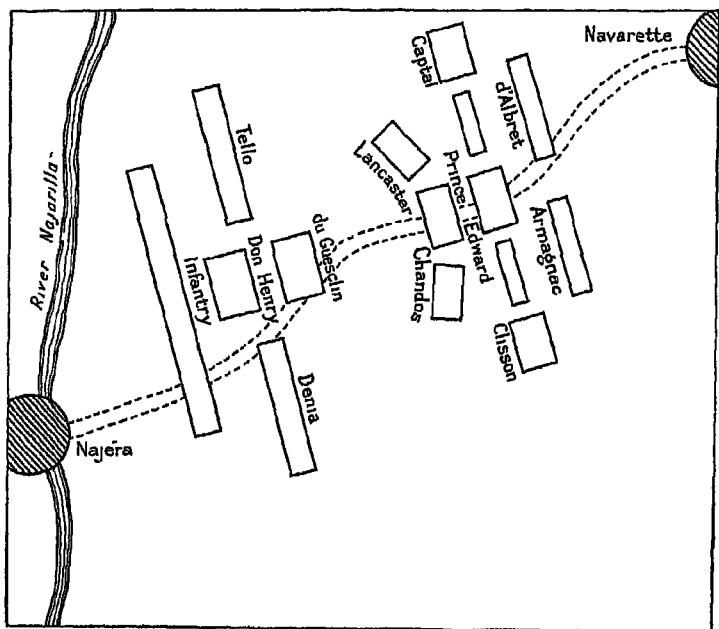
After that first surge forward of the French and Bretons, the two van-guards stood locked hand to hand and breast to breast, and neither would yield a hair's-breadth of ground. Then the two wings of Clisson and the Captal came on against the Spanish cavalry under Tello and Denia; and the light horsemen gave and broke before their onslaught like sheep under the menace of swooping eagles. Like sheep they scattered and ran, and like sheep Clisson and the Captal herded them, until they were

slaughtered or driven into the river Najarilla that ran behind them. There for the most part they were drowned, so that for days afterwards the river was blocked and dammed with corpses.

Don Henry's cavalry gave, but behind them his great mass of infantry held good, wielding their slings so vigorously that the flying stones came with such incredible force as to batter in steel helmets and shields. Gallantly they held their own against the heavy-armed men who came against them; but Prince Edward sent in his archers then, and the yew-bow proved itself more than a match for the leather sling. The infantry broke and wavered, and in its turn was swept away.

The flight of the two wings of Spanish cavalry had left du Guesclin unprotected on either flank, and now Clisson and the Captal, returning from their victorious pursuit, flung themselves upon him on either side, so that he was encompassed about on every hand, like a wild boar by the hounds. Clisson had flung the Spaniards from him as a man rids himself of a swarm of flies; but now he was come upon his mortal enemies, the French, and he went to his work with that fierce energy that was later to earn him the title of "the butcher." Grunting savagely as his blows won home, his great bronze-winged helmet shone like a blazing torch over the fight.

Don Henry saw the flight of his cavalry, the slaughter of his infantry; all that was left to him were his French and Breton allies, whose banners he could see in the thick of the fight, holding as steady as a rock, but a rock in a rising sea. He gathered the 1500 picked knights of his household about him, and three times he tried to cut his way through the tumult to come to the aid of that desperately fighting little knot of men; but Armagnac came up with his rear-guard, and three times drove him back. Then he saw his own knights of Castile giving about him, turning from him, quitting the field. In vain he appealed



BATTLE OF NAVARETTE.

to them, crying, "Sirs, for God's sake, help me! For you have made me King of Castile, and have also made oath to help me loyally!" But one by one they made off, until Don Henry was almost alone outside that raging tempest of steel that beat about the French and Breton knights. He was as helpless to succour them as he had been to rally his own men; and at last he allowed himself to be led from the field.

Du Guesclin was taken like a nut in a steel nut-cracker; but he was not so easily cracked, for all that. His little band was drawn up in a square now, from which the spears bristled out on all sides, like the spines of a porcupine. Time after time the Gascons and English flung themselves upon those deadly points, and time after time they drew back out of reach, contenting themselves for a space with the hurling of their battle-axes, or such stones as came to their hands.

The defence was long, bitter, obstinate; but it was as hopeless as the snarling defiance of a wolf in a trap. Looking on, Prince Edward laughed, for he loved gallant men, enemy or friend; and here, indeed, were men who attempted the impossible without loss of heart. Firm as oak trees before the woodcutter they stood, but ever and anon one came crashing down before the English and Gascon axes, and their serried ranks thinned with every assault.

There were too few of them left now to be a menace to anybody, and the battle-royal had turned into nothing but the useless slaying of valiant men. Prince Edward had no love of killing for killing's sake, so he prepared to give the *coup de grâce*. Raising his hand, he ordered his own division into the fight, and with Don Pedro beside him, came pricking forward to stop the bloody and senseless business.

Seeing him coming, du Guesclin threw up his visor and stripped off his gauntlet in sign of surrender, for resistance had become a stupidity now, and useless, since Don Henry

was away and in safety. He had not been able to save his royal master from his own folly, but he had saved him his life ; he could do no more. Prince Edward, too, raised his visor then, and came riding forward with outstretched hand, smiling, to receive the sword and grant the life of so worthy a foe.

But Don Pedro was not minded to see the man he considered to be his most deadly enemy, and the author of all his troubles, escape with his life thus tamely. Driving home his spurs, he launched himself forward in front of the Prince, and came tearing down with all the weight of his charger upon the man on foot who stood before him, with lowered sword and unprotected face. But if he thought to take du Guesclin unawares, he was sorely mistaken ; for the Breton stepped aside and lashed out at him as he thundered past, with such a blow as almost lost him his crown for ever that day, and his life with it. And that was the last blow of the battle of Navarette.

Prince Edward had been pleased with his battle, pleased with his opponents, pleased with his victory ; but he was less pleased with the news that was brought to him, to the effect that Don Henry had won free ; for, as he said, if that was the case, then nothing had been gained that day. Nor was he pleased with the royal ally for whom he had fought. Don Pedro in adversity had been meek and humble, gentle and soft-spoken ; but in victory he was a savage wild beast. He rent Spanish prisoners from the hands of their English and Gascon masters, cutting their throats with his own hand and laughing bestially at the feel of the hot blood on his skin. He begged the person of du Guesclin from the Prince, so that he might put him to death by one of those long-drawn-out martyrdoms of which he had the secret.

Prince Edward was revolted with what he saw and heard. None was more ruthless than he, but he did not

love brutality for its own sake ; and the idea of putting a gallant enemy to death by torture made him sick with disgust. He would not give up du Guesclin, he said ; the Breton had surrendered to him, and it was unbecoming that he should relinquish him to another. He would not give him up, nor would he sell him for his weight in gold, the price Don Pedro offered.

He was dismayed, angered, ashamed, that royal blood could thus demean itself in the sight of all men ; but he could not speak out his mind to his royal ally, nor stand for ever wrangling about a prisoner. So he gave du Guesclin into the safe-keeping of the Captal de Buch, and turned his back on the evil face of Don Pedro. As he did so, his glance fell upon another prisoner, and that was d'Audrehem. Now Prince Edward was angry, and he could not vent his wrath upon Don Pedro ; but the Marshal offered him an object on which to loose his ill-humour. D'Audrehem had been taken prisoner at Poitiers, and on being released on parole, had sworn that he would not take up arms against the Prince before his ransom was paid. The ransom was not yet acquitted ; but if any man had taken up arms that day, that man was the Marshal d'Audrehem.

So the Prince strode angrily up to him, calling him liar and traitor to his face. D'Audrehem lifted his head stiffly, saying that he was neither, and that no living man had the right to use such words to him. It may be the Prince had already repented of his action, for the Marshal was an old man, and a gallant, and none had as yet ever laid an aspersion on his honour. It was more anger against Don Pedro than against the Marshal that had caused his outburst ; but the thing was done, and he could neither apologise nor expect d'Audrehem to swallow the insult. So he named a jury of honour to settle the question—twelve knights : four English, four Bretons, and four Gascons.

After supper—a supper well fought for and well earned

and eaten on the victorious field itself—the case was heard. Prince Edward repeated his accusation—though in gentler terms. Then the Marshal made his defence. He had, he said, borne arms against Don Pedro, but not against the Prince of Wales—for Prince Edward was but a mercenary, serving the Spaniard for wages. The Prince may have been somewhat startled at thus hearing himself dubbed a “hired man,” but it was tit for tat, and in any case the argument was a sound one. To his honour be it said that he made no protest, but awaited the judgment of the jury he himself had named. The jury—be it also said in their honour—decided against the young heir to a great throne, and in favour of an old and humbly born soldier.

It had been said of Prince Edward that he had been hired for a wage; it now remained for him to collect that wage. So on the 5th of April he set out with Don Pedro for Burgos, where accounts were to be settled. There they kept Easter, during which feast it was not fitting that such mundane affairs as the payment of debts be discussed. After Easter, Don Pedro was too busy receiving the submission of his cowed but reluctant subjects to attend to less important business.

Not until the 2nd of May could he be persuaded to cast an indifferent eye upon the bill presented to him, which, with one thing and another, amounted to the trifle of 1,000,000 pieces of gold. This sum the Spaniard did not happen to have about his person; but before the high altar of the Cathedral of Burgos, he made solemn renewal of his bond. Then, satisfied that he had done his duty, he turned back to the more pleasing occupation of celebrating his victory over the Bastard.

Prince Edward began to suspect that there was something amiss with his theory of the universal brotherhood of royalty. In all good faith he had laboured to put this king back on his throne. He had said of him, “It is not

a question of his character, but of his royal rights," and he had refused to consider the question of his royal obligations. But even as Don Pedro had done with his own people, so did he now with his royal ally: accepted his rights, and turned his back upon his obligations. But as yet Prince Edward could not credit the evidence of his own senses, could not believe that a consecrated king could so far depart from the paths of honour as to deny the faith of kings, that a gold-spurred knight could so far forget his chivalry as to fail his knightly word and sacred oath. He would, then, wait for his money; but let Don Pedro at least deliver up to him the Province of Biscay, since that needed no collecting, but lay ready to his hand.

Don Pedro was all regrets, but the good people of Biscay, he said, objected to being handed over to a foreigner, and he, being a humane ruler, could not bring himself to force them to it. He would, however, go immediately to Seville to raise the money he owed; then let the Prince move to Valladolid and take his ease there, while he, Pedro, laboured on his behalf.

Prince Edward had never yet prevented a captive enemy from going in search of his ransom; so how could he now hold by force a friend and ally? He let Don Pedro go, let him part company with that Anglo-Gascon army for which he had no further use, let him disappear into the red land of Spain. He disappeared, and Prince Edward sat at Valladolid and waited; he still had faith, for his only experience of a king on parole had been King Jean of France; but he was never to see Don Pedro again.

He still had faith—but as the long summer months wore away, his faith flickered and dimmed, for its fire had been kept alive by promissory notes, and those do not make an enduring fuel. And now he was definitely uneasy. He was stranded in the heart of Spain with a large army that depended on him not only for its wages, but for every mouthful of food it consumed. He could not pay

his men, for not only had he failed to receive anything from Don Pedro, but he had lent him all the money he had. He could not pay his men, but he did what he could to feed them, giving them free licence to plunder the country about Valladolid. But even this effort turned against him, for the soldiery batted on the heavy wines of Spain, glutted themselves upon its unaccustomed fruits ; and the hot months being now come, their disordered diet brought the evils of dysentery and fever in its train. By the time the summer was over, not one man in five of that brilliant army was left alive.

The Prince, too, was ailing, sick of mind and heart and body. His faith in the honour of kings had deceived him, his ideal of chivalry had betrayed him. Nothing was left to him but his hard body of a fighting man ; and now that, too, failed him, for he fell sick of a mysterious malady. Some said that the heat was too great for his northern blood, some said that anger and disappointment sapped his strength ; but others said that Don Pedro had looked to one of his court physicians to rid him of this visitor of his who had not the tact to see when his welcome was outworn.

But Prince Edward did not die ; and at length Don Pedro, impatient at this creditor who clung to his life as he himself clung to his gold, wrote to him from Seville, saying that his grandees refused to part with their money so long as the foreigner remained on their soil. Let the Prince then return quietly to Aquitaine, and he would be paid there. Don Pedro gave his royal word of honour for it. But Prince Edward was alive now to the value of Pedro's honour, he was awake to the fact that a consecrated king can betray his own kind. He answered the messenger bitterly, saying, "The devil has dragged me into mixing in the affairs of your king," and turned his back upon him.

But what could he do ? Confident in the faith of kings,

he had let slip the moment when he could have taken his right by force of arms. He had about him now but the shadow of an army, a handful of sick and weary men, of whom scarce any were in a fit state to wield a sword, and who demanded nothing more of their commander than that he lead them home, out of this accursed land of Spain with its burning wines and its poisonous fruits.

It is possible that he might still have sat stubbornly on, until the climate or his beloved cousin of Spain had had their way with him ; but there came letters from his wife, to the effect that Don Henry, who "was no fool," had taken advantage of his continued absence to avenge himself for the battle of Navarette, and had burst into Aquitaine, taken Bagneres, and was wasting the country. There was only one course open : abandon his Province of Biscay, his 1,000,000 pieces of gold, and return to face his enemy. And the bitter hatred of Don Henry was the only payment he ever received for his Spanish campaign.

In September, there drifted back through the passes of Roncesvalles the ghost of that great army that had stormed through them so hardily in February. It was an army with a great victory to its credit, but that looked like the last haggard survivors of a crushing defeat. The Princess of Wales had been right : Don Pedro's table of gold had indeed cost them dear.

Henry of Trastamara returned to Spain as soon as he had enticed Prince Edward out of it, and went back to try conclusions once more with his royal brother. But his absence from Aquitaine was more than compensated for by the presence of the Free Companies. Having fought for the Prince on his campaign, they now came trailing back with him, demanding payment for their services. Payment ! But how was he to pay anybody ? He had stripped himself, even to his silver plate, to finance Don Pedro, and now he had nothing but an empty victory and

a handful of royal signatures to show for it. Having nothing in his coffers to give them, he abandoned to them the ransom of his prisoners; but that was no more than a biscuit thrown to a pack of starving wolves. So, as was their custom, the Companies decided to collect their dues in their own fashion, by looting and plundering Aquitaine. Whereupon the Prince suggested to them that, if loot they must, it would be a mark of patriotism on their part if they did it on the lands of his cousin of France, and not on his own. They seem to have agreed with his point of view, for they took themselves and their rapacity into the kingdom of France, where they proceeded to collect their wages with a hearty goodwill, explaining to those who protested that Prince Edward had sent them there for that purpose—which, rather naturally, somewhat irritated King Charles.

The Companies were disposed of, remained the Gascon seigneurs to be compensated for their services. This was more difficult; for "it happened that the Prince would not on any account lessen his expenses after the Spanish campaign, but maintained the same magnificent court and undiminished profusion."¹ For Edward, though he might be over the ears in debt, was still Prince of Wales, still Duke of Aquitaine—was still a Plantagenet—and he would hold his state as befitted his rank and his race. Seeing that he could not, without loss of prestige—in his own eyes at least—reduce his magnificent scale of living, he looked about for another way to pay his Gascons; and hit on the ingenious plan of laying a hearth-tax on those same Gascons for the raising of the necessary funds.

This scheme found but little favour with them, since it meant that their ruler took from them with one hand what he gave with the other; meant, in fact, that instead of being paid for their services, they themselves would have

¹ Froissart.

to pay for the doubtful privilege of setting Don Pedro back on his throne. They did not like it, and said so loudly. Neither did honest John Chandos like it, for he saw not only the tyranny, but the folly of such a piece of injustice, and remonstrated with his royal master. But the Prince, who had always heretofore lent his ear, if not his consent, to the advice of his life-long councillor, now cut him brutally short; for his illness, that clung to him like a vampire, made him more impatient than ever of any authority other than his own. And John Chandos, hurt to the soul that this man he had served with his heart and his body these many years past, should now turn upon him as though he were a meddling busybody, left Bordeaux and took himself off to his viscounty of Saint-Sauveur, washing his hands of the whole tragic business.

Prince Edward laid his hearth-tax—ten sous per hearth, for five years. The barons and seigneurs refused to pay, and he threatened them. The town of Rodez refused to pay, and he imprisoned their consuls, refusing to let them go even at the price of "600 francs and a pot of green ginger."¹ Then that which John Chandos had foreseen came to pass. The barons of Aquitaine, with one accord, revoked their allegiance to Prince Edward.

In June 1368 the Counts of Armagnac, Périgord, and Comminges took themselves to Paris and made formal complaint of their ruler to him whom they held, despite the Treaty of Bretigny, to be their "natural lord"—King Charles of France. King Charles received them with that charming courtesy, that angelic smile that he knew so well how to use on occasion—he was affability itself, though he made no definite response to their appeal for protection. He was affable to everybody, was King Charles, in that year. In May he received and right royally entertained at his court long Lionel, then on his way to Italy and his ill-starred marriage with Violante

¹ Froissart.

Visconti, at Milan.¹ In July he made an alliance with Don Henry of Spain, and sent him du Guesclin to put him back on his lost throne. He offered some particularly fine pieces of wine to King Edward. Yes, King Charles was affable to everybody in this year of 1368.

Prince Edward suspected that affability, and wrote to his father to beware of the thorns of King Charles's flowery speech. But King Edward was no longer the vigorous young warrior of Crécy. He was sated with victories, indolent with the sense of infallibility that they gave him. He had had the better of the warrior kings, Philippe and Jean ; why, then, be wary of this young bookworm of a Charles ? It was easier to listen to the suave voice of the son he had by him, than to read the long missives of that other one in Aquitaine ; and John of Gaunt had many a sly and mocking word to slip into his father's ear as to the disastrous results of the rash and hot-headed actions of his elder brother : had he not with his own eyes seen the fiasco of the Spanish campaign ? So King Edward listened to John of Gaunt, and was reassured. So long as King Charles continued to pay the instalments of his dead father's ransom, why trouble over the misconduct of a few rascally Gascons ?

King Charles paid his father's ransom—and in October he again received the Gascon nobles. They came to him now armed with the sworn adhesion of over 900 towns and strong places in Gascony, and their appeal was strengthened thereby. So much so, that King Charles summoned his council and his forty-eight notables, and put the case to them. His father had, he explained, written provisional letters of renunciation of his sovereignty over Aquitaine, which were to have been ratified at Bruges ; but when his commissioners had gone there for that purpose, they had not found the corresponding English

¹ Prince Lionel died suddenly in October of that year at Alba, shortly after his marriage to the Italian heiress.

officials. Moreover, the execution of those letters had been dependent on the carrying out of the terms of the Treaty of Bretigny ; and King Edward had not evacuated all the places ceded to France—some had been taken by regular assault by himself, others were still in the hands of the English. Moreover, the Free Companies ravaged the kingdom, sent there at the express orders of Prince Edward. Councillors and notables were of a like opinion—that not only had he the right, but it was his duty to reassume his suzerainty over Gascony, and call the Prince of Wales to account as his vassal. King Charles then summoned Prince Edward to appear before him at his court in Paris, to make answer to the charges of misgovernment brought against him.

At that, King Edward threw off his torpor, and in his turn called together his parliament, and in his turn spoke out his thoughts. It was true, he said, that he had signed letters of renunciation of his claim to the crown of France, but these had never been ratified, since his commissioners, sent to Bruges for that purpose, had not found there their French colleagues. Moreover, King Charles had broken the terms of the Treaty of Bretigny in that he had failed in certain payments, had not given up all the places agreed upon, and had proclaimed himself suzerain of Gascony. So that now he, Edward Plantagenet, proposed to resume his title of King of France—which title he had never, in any case, he declared, renounced.¹ With which sentiment the worthy members of Parliament heartily agreed.

And so King Charles reassumed his very useful attributes as suzerain of Aquitaine, and King Edward resumed his highly decorative title of King of France, and congratulated himself that he had never bothered to remove the golden fleurs-de-lis from his shield. But of what had

¹ "... asqueux nous ne renonciames unques teiblement ne expressement " Rymer, 30th December 1360.

become of the royal commissioners sent by both kings to Bruges, there can be no saying.

In January 1369, King Charles's letters to Prince Edward bidding him to Paris for judgment, reached him at Bordeaux. His sickness was so heavy upon him at that time, that he had taken to his bed ; but on hearing those letters, he raised himself upon his elbow, and with a flash of his old vigour spoke to those around him, saying, " Fair sirs, by my faith, it seems from what I see that these French take me for dead. But, as God comfort me, if I can rise from this bed, I will yet do them great harm, for God knows well that wrongfully they make complaint of me." Then he sent messengers back to King Charles, with the announcement that he would indeed come to Paris, but that it would be with his helmet on his head, and 60,000 men at his back.

Whereupon King Charles declared all English fiefs in the kingdom of France to be confiscated to the French Crown ; King Edward returned King Charles's gift of wine, and the French ambassadors at his court with it ; Prince Edward slew King Charles's messengers, and the Counts of Commignes and Périgord slew Prince Edward's officers in the Bigorre. In April 1369 war was declared.

King Edward, in drawing up the Treaty of Bretigny, had hoped to sever a limb of the kingdom of France ; but actually he had done no more than put a tourniquet upon it. Under the pressure of that tourniquet the isolated limb had become hot and inflamed with angry blood, swollen to the bursting-point. The pressure of blood must be relieved, or gangrene would set in ; King Charles relieved it. As a king he may have acted illegally, as a statesman, unscrupulously ; but he certainly acted as a wise physician when he cut the strangling bond of the Treaty of Bretigny, for it was a deadly and an impossible thing. At its cutting,

the national life-streams of his kingdom joined once more, and took their natural courses.

There could be no resistance to that rushing together of blood to blood. King Charles knew it, and he relied more upon nature than upon force of arms to make his kingdom whole once more. So he ordered his captains everywhere to refuse pitched battle, and to allow the English to wear themselves out with fruitless efforts.

But Prince Edward was in no state for effort of any kind. His strength and his spirit had been broken by the Spanish campaign, even his pride, since he could no longer so much as boast that he had made a King of Spain; for no sooner had he put Don Pedro back upon his throne, than du Guesclin had pulled him off again, and restored Don Henry; and definitely this time, for the "Bastard" had taken the wise precaution of slaying his half-brother.

All that was bright and unsullied in him was gone, the flower of his chivalry had withered under the red Spanish sun; but his will to be obeyed still lifted up its head. From his sick-bed he sent for John Chandos who, forgetting his grievances and remembering only his devotion, came. Him he made Sénéchal of Poitou, and put the ordering of his army into his hands. Help came from King Edward too, who sent his son Edmund of Langley, Earl of Cambridge,¹ and his son-in-law, John Hastynges, Earl of Pembroke, with reinforcements to take the place of the departed Gascon captains. Hugh Calverly came too, and his help was perhaps more valuable than that of the two earls, since he brought a useful troop of brigands with him.

Yet for all that, King Charles's brother of Anjou made an almost bloodless conquest of the Rouergue, while the Archbishop of Toulouse won over sixty towns to the French cause with no other weapon than his tongue.

John Chandos's first move was to suggest to Pembroke that they make a diversion by a concentrated invasion of

¹ Later Duke of York.

the Touraine ; but the Earl of Pembroke was too great a seigneur to act under the orders of plain John Chandos, and he refused ungraciously. He was not, however, too great a man to steal another's ideas, and he decided to make the attempt by himself. All went merrily at first, until Louis de Sancerre, Marshal of France, fell upon him and killed many of his men, driving the remainder to take shelter in an old fortified house, once the property of the Templars. All the Earl of Pembroke's youthful arrogance—he was but twenty-two—left him then, and he wished for nothing so much in the world as the opportunity to obey blindly the orders of battle-wise old John Chandos, and he sent messengers post-haste to get him.

These found him at table, and at first he would not listen, saying, " There is nothing I can do, it is too late " ; for the stupid insult of the young Earl had left him with " a great melancholy at heart."¹ But John Chandos's heart, if melancholy, was loyal ; and he was not one to see a fellow-countryman in distress and not fly to his aid. Scarcely had he finished speaking than he rose from the table, armed, and rode full tilt to the rescue of Pembroke. At his approach the Marshal Sancerre withdrew, and the young Earl was saved.

In the north things went as ill as in the south, the whole of Ponthieu " turning French " in the space of a week, and with scarce a blow struck. John, Duke of Lancaster, landed in Calais with an army, but the French, according to King Charles's instructions, refused to give him battle ; and after a few aimless raids and an abortive attempt to take Harfleur, where the activity of the shipyards caused some uneasiness, he withdrew again to Calais, and from there re-embarked for England.

All in that year was loss. La Roche-Valserque was lost, Realville, Cahore, La Roche-Posay. Even as far as

¹ Froissart

England itself the tide of misfortune reached, for King Charles sent out ships and burned Portsmouth. But King Edward and the Prince were to suffer a greater loss than any fortified place or harbour town—and that was the loss of Queen Philippa, that noble lady, “adorned with every virtue, and beloved of God and man.”¹ In her, Prince Edward lost his surest supporter at his father’s Court, and in her the King himself would seem to have lost what still remained to him of his ancient vigour and hardihood; for after the burning of Portsmouth, instead of raging against his enemies as he had done after that of Winchelsea, he retired to Northampton, “because it was said that that was the town in the centre of England.”²

But a greater loss than any of these for those who upheld English rule in Aquitaine was yet to come, and that was the loss of John Chandos.

Late in the year the French, under Louis de Saint Julien, and Alan Keranlouet the Breton, penetrated so far into Poitou that they were able to attack and take Saint Savin’s Abbey. This loss greatly touched Sir John, for he was Sénéchal of Poitou, and the Abbey was within striking distance of his capital, Poitiers. So two days before the end of the year he sallied out of Poitiers with some 350 spears, intent on retaking the place. In this he failed, for Saint Julien kept good watch.

Downcast at his lack of success, he started out on the homeward road; but at Chauvigny he halted, saying that he would ride no farther that day. Sending the bulk of his men on before him to Poitiers, he prepared to spend the night at Chauvigny. But scarcely had he supped and begun to prepare for bed than there came messengers, bidding him arm, for Saint Julien, Keranlouet, and their men had left Saint Savin’s Abbey and were on the road to Poitiers. But John Chandos was sick at heart and weary to death; not with struggling against the French, nor yet

¹ Froissart.

² *Débat des hérauts d’armes.*

at losing battles to them, for he was not of those who lose heart at a defeat. He was weary with giving advice that was not heeded, weary of rectifying the mistakes of others, of being sent for when it was too late, when the evils he had so clearly foreseen had come about. He was weary with struggling against the stubbornness of a Prince of Wales, against the silly pride of an Earl of Pembroke, against a future that he saw to be inevitable.

So at first he would not rise and arm again, saying dully, "I have no wish to ride. The French will find some one to fight without me." But John Chandos had never yet turned a deaf ear to a call to arms, and so now force of habit was too strong for him, and at length he rose and put on his armour, putting on over it a long surcoat of white samite, for the night was bitterly cold.

In the dead of night he set out on the road to Poitiers, along the banks of the river Vienne. The French were on the same road before him; and on the other side of the river, in advance of the French, rode the band of three hundred English spears that Chandos had sent on to Poitiers. The English rode gently, returning tranquilly homewards. The French rode hard, trying to catch them, and behind them came John Chandos at full gallop, hoping to come up with them before they took his men unawares. So the three bands rode through the freezing night, neither knowing where the others might be. But when dawn broke, the English and French saw each other, one on either side of the river, and they drove home their spurs in earnest, each striving to outride the other and reach the Bridge of Lussac first.

The French won, outstripping the English; but in the clattering rush of their own horses they had not heard the hoof-beats of Chandos's little band, hot upon their heels. Just as they drew rein and turned to take up their position on the bridge, he was upon them. He challenged them, reproaching them bitterly with ravaging Poitou,

of which he was the S^{én}chal. The French did not stay to argue the point of legality, but had at their enemies fiercely. At the first shock an Englishman, one Simekins Dodale, was unhorsed, and would have been done to death as he lay there on the road ; but Chandos cried out, " Will you let the man be killed, then ? On foot ! On foot ! "

Both sides dismounted then, and engaged hotly. Chandos, in his long white surcoat, came on to save his man. He wore an open helmet, for he was blind of an eye through a hunting accident, and for that reason never wore a vizor. Sword in hand he came forward to the assault ; but he tripped in the folds of his long, trailing surcoat, his foot slipped on the frozen ground. For a moment he lost his balance, lowered his guard striving to regain it ; and in that instant, an enemy lance found the opening of his vizorless helmet.

Some say that it was Alan Keranlouet who drove the blow home, some say that it was Louis de Saint Julien himself ; but whoever wielded that lance had a steady hand, for its point took John Chandos full in the face, midway between the nose and the eye. The French rushed forward to take him then, but one Edward Clifford stood astride his body, and defended it sturdily. The French were eager for so rich a prize, and things might have gone ill with their adversaries ; but by this time the second band of English had ridden up, and they came storming over the bridge. The French, taken on both sides, must needs surrender, since they could not fly, for their varlets, seeing the approach of the English, had prudently retired out of reach, taking their masters' horses with them.

So the English had a rich haul of prisoners ; but that could not out-balance their loss, for they saw that John Chandos was mortally stricken. Sir John's brother would have slain the prisoners, in vengeance for his loss ; but Sir John would not have it, saying that the French had but done their duty, and were rather to be praised than blamed.

They carried him back to Chauvigny then, and there he lay for two days and nights, between life and death. But his wound was past mortal healing, and it may be that he had no very great desire to live. On the 1st of January he died, beloved of his friends, respected by his enemies, the "good companion" of all men. And so the year 1370 opened with an ill omen.

Prince Edward still grasped at his Duchy of Aquitaine, but it was slipping away from him like dry sand between his fingers. His father had done what he could to help him, but the measures he took were ill-advised, perhaps because his adviser was that glib-tongued son of his, John, Duke of Lancaster. He borrowed money for the campaign, "pretending that it schuld be spent in profite of the reme; but it was spent al othir wyse."¹ He set up a court of appeal at Saintes, he lowered the duties on wine, he abolished the hated hearth-tax; all wise enough measures if they had been applied in time, but which had now no other effect than still further to diminish Prince Edward's authority over his Gascons, since they saw that his word was not law. Then, on the 1st of July, he sent Lancaster in person to help his brother; sent him with such powers as made it seem that he was to supersede the Prince, rather than to lend him support.

King Charles, feeling that the time for definite action was now come, formed two great armies, and put them under the orders of his brothers, the Dukes of Berri and Anjou. The host of Anjou was to leave from Toulouse, and march down the valley of the Garonne against La Reole. That of Berri was to march against Limoges. These strong places once taken, the two were to join forces to attack Bordeaux, under the command of du Guesclin, whom King Charles had recently recalled from Spain. The Breton met Anjou at Toulouse, and together

¹ Capgrave.

they marched down the Garonne. Moissac fell before them, and Agen, Pont-Sainte-Marie, Aiguillon, and Tonniens. Together they marched to within five leagues of Bordeaux, and there du Guesclin left Anjou, and hurried off to the assistance of Berri, who was before Limoges.

With the French at his very gates, with Lancaster flaunting his title of King's Lieutenant for Aquitaine in his face, Prince Edward roused himself. He was too swollen with dropsy to mount his horse, but he would neither be beaten by the French, nor replaced by Lancaster, without a struggle. He named a meeting-place at Cognac, and from there, with his two brothers of Lancaster and Cambridge, and his brother-in-law, Pembroke, he set out, carried in a litter, for his last campaign.

He would turn first against the Duke of Anjou, who was the immediate danger, since he had no fears for Limoges, invested by the Duke of Berri; for Limoges was in the care of Bishop Jean de Cros, who had long been his trusted friend—his “compère”—and he had faith in him. Had he but known it, that same “compère” of his was even then in treacherous communication with the Duke of Berri; and within the space of a few days, on the 24th of August, the city of Limoges had been delivered up, and Prince Edward betrayed.

That was the final drop of bitterness in his cup. It had been well-nigh brimming before, with the faithlessness of Don Pedro, the sly treachery of Lancaster, the breaking away of the Gascon seigneurs. On none of these had he been able to take vengeance, but the city of Limoges should pay for them all.

His army was not ready to march till the 7th of September. But on that day he sallied out of Cognac at the head of over 5000 men—1200 spears, 1000 archers, and 3000 foot soldiers—and with the Earls of Cambridge and Pembroke, and the Duke of Lancaster. He took the

head of his army resolutely ; but he was no longer the gallant youth of Crécy, the hero of Poitiers, the victor of Navarette. He was a helpless invalid, swollen with his sickness, too unwieldy and too feeble to go a-horseback—but nevertheless he went out resolutely to chastise the culprit that was to serve as scapegoat for all the accumulated wrongs and humiliations of the past—Limoges. And he swore his great oath, by the soul of his father, that he would have the place at his mercy before he left it.

On the 7th of September he left Cognac ; and despite the weakness of his body, such was the strength of his will that he covered the thirty-five leagues that separated him from his vengeance in seven days and nights. On the 14th of September he appeared before the walls of Limoges.

At the sight of the English, the people of Limoges were terrified ; for the Duke of Berri had left them but a handful of fighting men, under the leadership of Jean de Villemur, Hugues de La Roche, knights, and Roger de Beaufort, esquire. In all, they had not within their walls more than 500 fighting men capable of bearing arms. But Jean de Villemur comforted them, saying, "Sirs, fear nothing ; we are numerous enough, and strong enough, to hold out against the forces of the English Prince ; and he can neither take us nor harm us by assault, for we are well supplied with artillery."

Prince Edward, too, was of a like idea, for the walls of the place were high and strong ; nor did he dare to wait till famine should take the town for him, for du Guesclin was in the neighbourhood, and might fall upon his back at any moment. So he decided on another mode of warfare, and called upon the services of "those peasants that are called miners,"¹ and of whom he had a great many with him.

These set to work at once, driving their mines hardily towards the walls of the town ; and Prince Edward, who

¹ FROISSART

had led so many a brilliant assault, stormed so many a strong place, sat heavily in his tent while peasant-folk carried on his siege for him. But those within the walls were not to be had so easily; they detected the activities of the besiegers, countermined, and slew the English miners. But there were ever more to be had to take their places, and with the patient persistence of their kind, they carried on their subterranean labours. Mine after mine was driven towards the walls of Limoges, but ever they were detected and destroyed. How many English miners lost their lives ingloriously underground in that siege of Limoges cannot be told, for the chroniclers of those times did not dip their pens in such humble blood as theirs.¹

But at length, after a month of mine and countermine, of underground attack and underground defeat, the master-miner came to Prince Edward and said, "My Lord, when it shall please you, we will bring down a great section of the wall into the moat, by which you will be able to enter at your ease, without obstacle."

"Then," said the Prince, "show me your work to-morrow, at the first hour after sunrise."

At the time appointed the miners fired their works, and the whole of the wall between the Panet Gate and the Aleresia Tower came crashing down, a great mass of ruins that blocked the moat from side to side. By that gaping breach, the foot-soldiers, the "pillards," rushed in, pouring over the debris like water over a broken dam, howling their triumph, yelling their delight at the thought of the booty that awaited them in that rich town. Through the

¹ The "mine" of those times was an excavation dug under the walls of a town. In some cases the miners worked openly at the base of the wall, under the protection of an immense shield, called a "sow." But in other cases they approached the foot of the wall by means of subterranean tunnels. While the work under the wall was in progress, the masonry of it was propped up by great beams of wood. When all was ready, and the wall sufficiently undermined, the miners set fire to these beams; and, as they burned through, the whole section of the wall that rested upon them, collapsed.

breach they flooded, and around the walls, till they came to the Panet Gate. This they burst open, and cut the chains of the drawbridge, so that the mounted men might enter in their turn. Then the heavy-armed horsemen thundered in, and a wail of agony went up from the doomed town, for Prince Edward had ordered that no quarter be given to man, woman, or child on that day, and his orders were obeyed.

The blow had fallen with so stunning an unexpectedness that those within the town had no time to organise a resistance; they were caught helpless and unarmed in the streets, and helpless and unarmed they were slaughtered. They ran hither and thither like rats in a barn with the terriers among them, and with shouts of delight in the sport the English had after them, clubbing, stabbing, spearing—a mass of uncontrolled soldiery, given leave to kill as they would.

Hearing the uproar and the shouting, the Duke of Berri's three gentlemen, Villemur, de La Roche, and Beaufort, looked at one another aghast, for their trained ears told them what was afoot. And Villemur said, "Sirs, it would seem that we are all dead men; but let us sell ourselves as dearly as we may." Then those three, with the forty men of their suite, set their backs to a wall and prepared to take such toll as they could for their lives. And that was the only resistance the town of Limoges made.

Meanwhile the soldiery roared like a death-giving wind through the town. Whatever living thing fell beneath their hands, they killed. They did not stop for plunder; that would come later, after the blood-lust was assuaged. For the moment the fury of killing was upon them, and unchecked that fury took its course. Old men, women, babes at the breast, nothing came amiss for the assuaging of it. Human wolves in a human sheepfold, they killed for the delight of killing, scarce knowing at what they

slashed with their swords, into what they drove their spears, save that it was living flesh and blood. There was blood upon their weapons, blood on their hands, blood beneath their feet, and the smell of blood in their nostrils. The feel, the sight, the reek of it drove them mad, made them blind to mercy, deaf to pity, unconscious of what they did, save only that they killed and killed.

Riding in a cumbersome four-wheeled chariot, Prince Edward entered the town in the wake of the tempest of death he had let loose upon it. Through the awful nightmare of those crimson, shrieking streets he went, propped up on his silken cushions, immobile and expressionless as the carven image of some obese eastern demi-god. Men, women, and children flung themselves on their knees at his passing, imploring him that he show them mercy. He looked neither to right nor to left, gave no sign that he either heard or saw, and went slowly, heavily, on his way through the blood-drenched streets. Terror rode before him, despair went at his side, and death came on behind.

He had killed innocent folk before—ay, and women and children—but it had been in hot blood, and the white heat of battle cleanses many things. But he was no longer the brilliant young avenger, the ardent fanatic, ruthless as a forest-fire but as splendid, who had stormed through the Languedoc, and ridden into the very heart of France. He was no longer hot with the strife of battle; he was cold with resentment, with disappointment, with failure; and bitter cold was his anger. He sat unmoving, watching others wreaking his vengeance for him. He no longer wove for himself the terrible but magnificent tapestry that was his life, but let others weave into it, strand by strand, the scarlet threads of the massacre of Limoges.

Unmoving, looking out through dull eyes narrowed by the swollen flesh of his face, he looked on at the slaying of youths and maidens, matrons and greybeards, and gave no sign. Only when he came upon the place where the

French soldiers made their stubborn but hopeless resistance, did he check his onward progress. For a moment a spark of interest lightened his half-closed eyes; for there, indeed, was a sight to make a corpse itself, had it once contained a warrior's soul, stand up to see. The French had all been slain, save only their leaders, Jean de Villemur, Hugues de La Roche, and Roger de Beaufort. Those three still held their places, backs to the wall, defending their bodies valiantly. And against them there strove the Duke of Lancaster and the Earls of Pembroke and Cambridge. About them a horde of soldiery stood looking with all their eyes, but moving no hand either to help or to hinder, for none dared interfere in this fighting of their betters. Prince Edward, too, looked on, "and in looking, his anger was greatly softened and curbed."¹ And when at length the three Frenchmen surrendered their swords, he waived for their sakes his order of no quarter.

Presently there was brought to him Jean de Cros, Bishop of Limoges, the renegade. On him he gazed with less pleasure, and swore that he would have his head. But his brother of Lancaster pleaded for the ecclesiastic's life, for though he might be a traitor, he was still a high Church dignitary. At length the Prince gave way, and the Bishop was saved. And so, of the population of Limoges, there were spared three gallant men and one man who had forsworn himself. As for the rest, they lay drowned in their own blood—men, women, and children—and the cry of agony of Limoges was stilled.

At dusk, the torch was set to the four quarters of the town, and all night it burned and blazed, a great funeral pyre for 3000 dead, a sacrificial fire to one man's implacable anger.

Limoges, that rich city, was taken, snatched back from the hands of the French; but, for the first time, Prince Edward came out of a fight with an unstained sword.

¹ Froissart.

For those who would read the chronicle of Edward Plantagenet, Edward the Black Prince, the book of his life ends here, sealed with the scarlet seal of Limoges. It is only for those who would see in him a wooden knight on the chess-board of politics, that his end was not yet come.

The sands were slipping through his fingers. In that year there left his service Olivier de Clisson, the Breton, lured away by his great compatriot, the new Constable of France, Bertrand du Guesclin, that rough captain who had so strange a fascination for fighting men that "they ranged themselves about him, as chickens press about a hen."¹ And in that year he lost his strongest ally, Charles of Navarre, because he would not keep his word to him and give him Limoges as he had promised. In that year he lost his little six-year-old son, Edward.

Then at last even his stern hands relaxed, and of his own will he let fall the last grains of power they still held; let them fall into the eager hands of Lancaster, who clutched at them greedily.

He took ship at Bordeaux, leaving the care of Aquitaine to his brother, who, in the arrogance of his narrow, ambitious spirit, thought that he could yet blow on the cold ashes of defeat and kindle them to a flame of victory. In January he set foot in England—and he who had left it but eight years before, the proud young conqueror of Jean the warrior-king, came back defeated by Charles the *clerc*, "that mysterious man who never took the field himself, nor allowed his armies to fight."² He who had gone forth to win his crown as hardily as a young esquire goes out to win his spurs, came back a broken man, old at forty-one, stricken to the death with disease—he who might have died of the sword at Poitiers.

Of all the hopes that had gone with him to Aquitaine,

¹ Christine de Pisan.

² Longman.

all the dreams, he brought none back to England with him ; he brought no hopes for the future, save only his son Richard, Richard of Bordeaux, a child with disaster on his brow.

He met his father at Windsor ; and there he saw that the house of Plantagenet was shaken not only in its outer works, but in its very foundations. For what was left of that great Court, dignified in its sumptuous splendour, that he had left so short a while ago ? Its principal ornament and support, his mother, was gone ; his brother Lionel, that splendid giant of a man, lay dead in Italy. His eldest sister, the proud Isabella, who had scorned so many brilliant marriages, mourned for her handsome French husband, the Sire de Coucy, who had left her to fight in Italy, since he would take up arms neither against his lord the King of France, nor against his father-in-law the King of England, and since men of his name must needs take up the sword against somebody. His sister Mary, who had married Jean IV. of Brittany, was dead, and dead, too, was Margaret, wife of the Earl of Pembroke. John of Lancaster was in Aquitaine, and had left behind only his dissolute and avaricious band of young courtiers. Edmund was with him. There remained only sixteen-year-old Thomas of Woodstock¹ at the Court. And his father—his father, the Lion of England—gave to the whole world the spectacle of his indignity, his senile passion for his mistress, Alice Pierce, who flaunted in the face of the Prince the very jewels that had adorned his mother's gracious and royal person.

He left that mockery of a court at Windsor, and took himself to his manor of Berkhamstead.

He had been the undisputed master of one-third of France, he had been the greatest captain of his age, and

¹ Later Duke of Gloucester.

the flower of chivalry of his time. But now his brother sat in his place, the great figure of du Guesclin threw its shadow over his military renown, and his shield was smirched with the red stain of Limoges—for even the hardened society of those days shuddered at the memory of that horror. All that he had left to him was his wife, and that precious seed of the future, Richard of Bordeaux.

With those two he retired to Berkhamstead, and from there looked on, a spectator, at the last act of the drama of his life, that great *chanson de geste* that had turned to tragedy at the end. Under the rising power of du Guesclin, he saw English rule in France crack and break up like ice under a fierce sun, and its fragments swept away on the stream that King Charles had let loose—that stream of tremendous power, called patriotism.

He saw Lancaster abandon the Duchy of Aquitaine to its fate while he sat at Bordeaux and made love to the daughter of Don Pedro, Constance; for it had come to the tortuous mind of that young prince that it would be easier and more agreeable to obtain the kingdom of Spain by marriage with Constance, than the Duchy of Aquitaine by defeating du Guesclin.¹ So he abandoned the affairs of the duchy to the Captal de Buch and Thomas Felton, and married Constance, while his brother Edmund, for good measure, married her younger sister Isabella. Then in May 1372, bringing the two heiresses of Don Pedro with them, the two brothers sailed for home. Once there, Lancaster proudly styled himself "King of Castile," thereby forcing Henry of Trastamara into active alliance with the French, he who had so far been no more than a sympathetic onlooker.

Shortly afterwards, the Earl of Pembroke was appointed King's Lieutenant in Aquitaine. He set sail with thirty-six galleys and a great treasure—"in nobles and in florins, such a sum of money as would pay 3000 combatants for

¹ His wife, Blanche of Lancaster, had died in 1369.

a year.”¹ He made for La Rochelle, thinking to relieve the place, besieged by the French. But outside the harbour he fell in with some forty Spanish ships, Don Henry’s answer to Lancaster’s claim to the Crown of Castile. There, under the very walls of La Rochelle, Pembroke’s galleys were sunk, and he himself taken prisoner; for the common folk of the town were French at heart, and would not obey the orders of their governors to man barges and go to the help of the English. And so all that great sum of money was lost, and so Don Henry replied to the threat against his Crown.

During that year, Prince Edward’s waning life seemed to take on new strength, though in truth it was only the last dim flicker of a burned-out lamp. In August, he joined an expedition that set sail to relieve Thouars, the last English foothold in Poitou, besieged by du Guesclin. King Edward gathered four hundred ships for this last despairing effort, and caused mariners to be impressed throughout the western counties to man them. Fourteen thousand fighting men went aboard them, with, for captains, King Edward himself, the Prince, the Duke of Lancaster, and Edmund, Earl of Cambridge. It was as well-found an expedition as had ever come beating down on the shores of France, and one that might yet win back Poitou to the cause of England.

King Edward and his sons were ready to measure themselves against the unbeatable du Guesclin; but they had an even more powerful adversary than him to face, and that was the weather. Steadily day and night the wind blew off France, an invisible but unconquerable defender of her coast. For nine weeks the fleet beat against it, making painful progress one day, only to be driven back the next. Nine weeks, and never did the wind shift, until at last, in despair, King Edward let it

¹ Froissart.

have its way, and drive him home. And even as he set foot on shore the wind shifted, turning almost in a moment from east to west. At that, those who watched the landing crossed themselves, for they said that "God was for the French."¹

At that final rebuff, the iron will of the Prince at last cracked and gave way, since not only man, but the very winds of heaven were against him. In November of that year, he formally and of his own free will resigned the Duchy of Aquitaine, returning it once more into his father's hands.

In that same year was taken prisoner the only true friend Prince Edward ever had among the Gascon seigneurs, Jean de Grailly, Captal de Buch. He was taken by Pierre d'Auvilliers, before Soubise. Auvilliers led him to the newly fallen city of La Rochelle—and when he saw the town in French hands he cried aloud, "Ah, Guienne! Guienne! Now art thou truly lost!"

Delivered into the hands of King Charles, he was lodged sumptuously but securely in the Temple. In vain he offered five times his yearly income as ransom, King Charles turned a deaf ear. The only way out of that prison was the way of betrayal, and the Captal would not take it, though the King promised him it should lead to high honours and a rich marriage. The Captal de Buch had given his loyalty, and such men as he do not give it twice in a lifetime. He was true to it to the end.²

The Captal de Buch was the last prop to the tottering wall of English rule in France, and with his removal it came crashing down. In the next year, 1373, du Guesclin was again in the field, gathering up the fragments to build a new wall of defence for King Charles. In March he took

¹ Froissart.

² It is said that he died of grief for Prince Edward; for hearing of his death, he refused to eat and drink, and himself died very shortly after.

Chizé, and with it the Viscount of Rochechouart and the Sire d'Argentin, the last of the Poitevin lords to hold for the English. By the end of that year, the Breton captain had regained for his royal master all the Bretigny concessions, and much more besides.

At the end of 1373, Lancaster made a futile attempt to emulate the "*grandes chevauchées*" of his brother. He landed at Calais with 3000 men-at-arms and 8000 archers, well-equipped and well armed in every way, with the intention of making a victorious march through France to Bordeaux. With such a force, he was ready to face any army that King Charles might send against him. But King Charles sent no army, he used the very desolation of his own country as a weapon against the invader. Through that utter waste of war-ruined land Lancaster's army made its way, finding neither food nor drink, nor fodder for its horses. So that the great host that had left Calais in all the pride of its force, reached Bordeaux a crew of ragged, starving men, an army utterly routed without the striking of a blow.

Lancaster returned to England from his disastrous expedition in April 1374, leaving behind him the whole of Aquitaine in French hands, save only Bordeaux and Bayonne.

In that year was definitely lost to the English cause Gaston Phœbus, Count of Foix. The French had issued a challenge to the English, to take the field against them on the 15th of August; whereat Foix, whose heart had always been French though his pride had turned English, said that he would accept the judgment of God, and abide by the result of that day. But the English had more serious matters than the answering of challenges to think of, and they failed to keep the day; so Gaston Phœbus returned to his natural allegiance to the Crown of France.

In 1375, King Charles signed a truce of one year; for

he saw that King Edward was declining into senility, and Prince Edward towards the tomb. After those two, the next King of England would be a little young child ; and King Charles hoped to gain more by the troubles that come in the wake of a long regency, than by force of arms. So he signed the truce, and sat back to wait for time to finish the work he had so ably begun.

Prince Edward, too, looked forward, though with dread, to that period of regency that awaited his little son. His last strength was given to opposing the ever-increasing power of his brother of Lancaster ; for seeing the dissolute, disreputable crowd of courtiers that upheld it, he felt the tragic danger. Looking from the secret face of Lancaster to the frail body of Richard, he was afraid. And so now he, who had no longer either the will or the power to fight for himself, still fought that his son might receive that ultimate glory that he himself could never know—the Crown of England.

In April of 1376, when the “ good Parliement ” met, he still led the attack against the abuses of the administration, still struggled against the undesirable followers of his brother of Lancaster. But in July of that same year, he felt that his time was come.

He took leave of his royal father, begging that he would watch over his widow, she who had been the Fair Maid of Kent, and who had loved him. Then, lying on his bed in the Palace of Westminster, he ordered that the doors of his chamber be opened, so that all who served him, or had served him in the past, might have free access to him, and take their leave of him. And when all the gentlemen of his household were gathered about him, he spoke, saying, “ Fair lords, behold, ’fore God, we are not lords here on earth : all will have to pass this way. No man may escape it. Wherefore I beg of you most humbly that you will pray for me.”

Then there came into his chamber one Richard Stury, whom he hated with all his heart, for he was of Lancaster's party, and had given evil advice to the king, his father. On him he turned his back, bidding him coldly leave the room. The Bishop of Bangor, who attended him, remonstrated, begging that in this last, supreme hour of his life he would pardon his enemies. At first the Prince would not utter that word of pardon, saying no more than, "Oui, je le ferai"; and at the Bishop's insistence he repeated again, angrily, impatiently, "Je le ferai, je le ferai!" But at length the last bulwark of his pride gave way; and with a humility as royal as ever that pride had been, he gave pardon to all those who had sinned against him, and asked pardon of those against whom he had sinned.

At peace then with God and man, he folded his hands calmly on his breast and prayed. Then, looking from one to the other of those who stood about him, he spoke for the last time. In a clear, strong voice, he said aloud, "I commend to you my son, who is very young and little; and I pray you that, even as you have served me, so will you serve him loyally."

And so died, in the forty-sixth year of his age, Edward Plantagenet, Prince of Wales, Duke of Aquitaine, Duke of Cornwall, Earl of Chester and of Kent.

"Or prions Dieu le Roy des Roys,
Qui pour nous mourut en le croys,
Que il eit de s'ame pardon
Et li otroie de son don
Le gloire de son paradis.

Amen."

CHANDOS HERALD.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

(See page 11)

"Et les Englès demorèrent tout koy et descliquierant aucuns canons qu'ils avoient en la bataille pour esbahir les Genevois." (Froissart.)

(Translation)

And the English kept all still, and discharged some cannon that they had in the battle, to astonish the Genoese.

"Ainsi s'en alla le roy à toute sa gent assemblée aux Anglais, lesquels Anglais gietterent trois canons, dont il avint que les Genevois arbaletriers, qui estoient au premier front, tournerent le dos." (*Grandes Chroniques de France.*)

(Translation)

Thus the king (Philippe) and all his people assembled, went up against the English, and the English fired three cannon, by which it came about that the Genoese cross-bowmen, who were in the front rank, turned back.

"Lis Englès avoient entre eulx deulx bombardieaulx, et en firent deux ou trois descliquer sur les Genevois, que trop mal ordenement se mirent quant ils les oïeent ruer." (Froissart.)

(Translation)

The English had with them two bombards, and discharged them twice or thrice against the Genoese, who fell into great disorder when they heard them roar.

" . . . sy commencièrent à traire les Anglois aux nostres et getterent trois canons, sy que les diz arbalestriers furent espoventez." (*Continueur de Nangis.*)

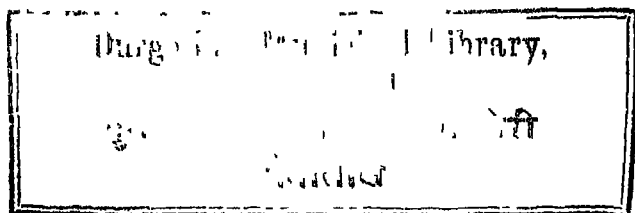
(*Translation*)

. . . then the English began to shoot on our people, and fired three cannon, so that the cross-bowmen were dismayed.

" Edouard avait des bombards qui avec le feu lancaient de petites balles de fer, pour effrayer et détruire les chevaux : et que les coups de ces bombardes causèrent tant de tremblement et de bruit, qu'il semblaît que Dieu tonnait avec grand massacre de gens et renversement de chevaux." (*Villani.*)

(*Translation*)

Edward had bombards which, with fire, threw little iron balls, to frighten and destroy the horses : and the firing of these bombards caused such trepidation and so much noise that it seemed as though God thundered, with a great slaughter of people and overthrowing of horses."



PRINCIPAL WORKS CONSULTED

<i>The Brut, or English Chronicles.</i>	
<i>Chronique des Quatre Premiers Valois</i>	
<i>Chronique de Flandres.</i>	
<i>Chronique de Louis de Bourbon.</i>	
<i>Chronique de Normandie.</i>	
<i>Récit d'un Bourgeois de Valenciennes.</i>	
<i>Grandes Chroniques de France.</i>	
<i>Cronycles of Englonde</i>	Caxton, William.
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